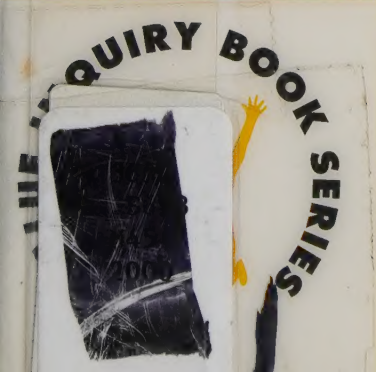
Memoirs of the Twentieth Century

Ugo Spirito

Translated from Italian and
Edited by Anthony G. Costantini



MEMOIRS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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MEMOIRS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Ugo Spirito

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Anthony G. Costantini

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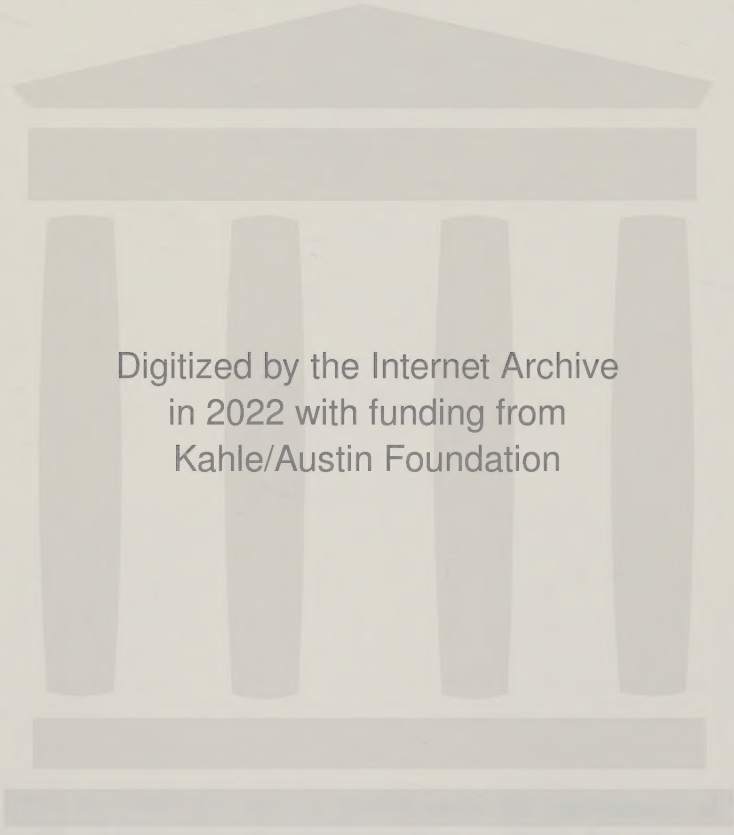
For Rita Costantini, my sister,
and
Joanna Vellone McKenzie, my friend.



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FOREWORD

Ugo Spirito's *Memorie di un incosciente* (Milan: Rusconi, 1977), translated by Anthony G. Costantini as *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century*, gives its reader an impressionistic artist's rendering of its author's rather checkered life and career. Ugo Spirito, one of Italy's most prominent and creative thinkers during the first half of the twentieth century, along with Guido Calogero, were among Giovanni Gentile's best university students. Whereas Calogero was strongly influenced by the American pragmatists, especially by John Dewey's concept of philosophy as method, Spirito followed more closely in the footsteps of his neo-Hegelian professor, Gentile, to espouse fascist corporativism, along with the Marxist concept of the abolition of private property.

Spirito's recollections, gathered as they are within one volume, and only loosely connected by chapter headings, should not be taken as literal representations of events during the Italian fascist period. Although Spirito does present an insider's view of fascism, it is a somewhat distorted one. At times, for example, Spirito describes Benedetto Croce as a fascist, and then as a liberal conservative who was opposed to revolutionary fascism. Croce was neither an actual idealist nor a fascist party member, as were Spirito and his great mentor and self-proclaimed "philosopher of fascism" Giovanni Gentile. Indeed, Croce would best be described as a neo-Kantian, nineteenth-century European liberal.

Instead of reading Spirito's *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century* as factual accounts of persons and events, we should follow the author's own suggestion and view his descriptions and autobiographical statements impressionistically. We would then learn from Spirito's feeling and mood about the complex reactions of the author, an intelligent and creative person, to the tumultuous, at times revolutionary period in which he lived. Spirito's personal transformations were indeed consistent with those of his time. He moved from early positivism as espoused by Enrico Ferri and Maffeo Pantaleoni, to Gentile's actual idealism, to fascism and corporativism understood in a communist sense, to what Spirito called "problematicism"; from a life of self-awareness to a nihilistic existence unaware of ultimate metaphysical meaning.

Myra Moss
Professor of Philosophy, Claremont McKenna College

PREFACE

by the Translator and Editor

In *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century*, Ugo Spirito's recollections are intertwined with historical figures, with the ideology and politics of his time, and, above all, with the exposition of the evolution of his philosophical beliefs.

The tone of the book is uneven. On several occasions, the author's emotions take over and the language becomes poetic and loses the rigor of the scholarly presentation. As translator, I tried to capture Spirito's complex emotional and intellectual state and to illustrate the depth of his passions and convictions. But the famous Italian refrain, "traduttore, traditore," reminds me that a translation is only a bad rendering of the original.

Memoirs of the Twentieth Century was written in Italian in 1977 before the appearance of the movement in scholarly English to replace male-gendered words with gender-neutral language. In translating Spirito, I have not adhered to today's standards because I did not wish to compromise the spirit of a past age, especially the events that took place during the fascist era. However, I have adopted gender-neutral language in my Introduction.

To make the translation easier to read, I have tried, whenever possible, to express in the first person what Spirito wrote using the Italian impersonal form. Stylistically speaking, Spirito uses the impersonal form to express his own beliefs; therefore, the translation retains the meaning and intent of the original text.

For the convenience of the reader, I have placed in brackets the translation of articles and books cited in Italian by Spirito in his text. The Bibliography and Appendix also indicate the English equivalent for titles in Italian. I have included in the Bibliography works that I cite in my Introduction as well as works cited by Spirito. The end notes to the chapters, including discussion material, are those of Spirito, unless otherwise indicated. Bracketed material in main text and notes are my editorial additions.

Information on persons, events, and institutions mentioned in the book is given in the Appendix to help the reader appreciate the context of Italian history and culture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the School of Humanities and the Office of Graduate Studies, Research, and International Programs of California State University, Northridge for their financial support of this project. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Umberto Mariani (Rutgers University) and Dr. Augustus Pallotta (Syracuse University) for their valuable suggestions. I thank Dr. Giuseppe Parlato of the Fondazione Ugo Spirito of Rome for permission to translate and publish *Memorie di un incosciente* in English. The photographs and illustrations in this book were graciously provided by the Fondazione Ugo Spirito.

Editor's Introduction

UGO SPIRITO: A PROFILE

Ugo Spirito, one of Italy's most freethinking philosophers, is still largely unknown in the English-speaking world because his works have not been translated into English. In the rare instances when one comes across references to his work, Spirito is presented as a follower of Giovanni Gentile, a leader of a left-wing school of thought inspired by Gentile, a theoretician of corporativism, and the initiator of "problematicism." Even so, no serious analysis of Spirito's work had been published until now. While it is not easy to pinpoint all the reasons that would justify the cultural omission of this philosopher—whose works have already been translated into more than twenty languages—one reason may have to do with the indiscriminate condemnation of the entire fascist culture on the part of the Italian intelligentsia dominated by communists and leftists in the first decades after World War II. This condemnation was not subjected to critical analysis by the cultural establishment of the English-speaking countries, which fought on the front lines against fascism and maintained an understandable hostility toward all its manifestations.

In *La vita come ricerca* (*Life as a Search*, 1937), Spirito offered his explanation for the state of uneasiness that began to spread among the most active minds of the time. He emerged as an original and anticonformist thinker who challenged the philosophical establishment. From the time of that publication, he interpreted, with sharpness and originality, the most nagging problems arising from the philosophical and scientific investigations of the twentieth century. He personally confronted the various fields of knowledge, from anthropology to sociology, from law to psychology, from politics to philosophy. Spirito's reflections on antinomy; on the relationship between science and philosophy; on the various philosophical schools of positivism, historicism, and actual idealism; on the ideologies of fascism, communism, and democracy; on the religious inheritance of Christianity; and on the relationship between the absolute and the individual, provoked confusion among his readers who found themselves forced to contend with speculations that led to ever-changing conclusions and refused to be confined into a system. Yet the depth of his intuitions and the boldness of his arguments ensnared the same readers, who warmly embraced or flatly rejected each of his books. Because Spirito refused to rest upon an absolute truth, his thought continually expanded upon itself and was not easy to label. Consequently, it was difficult, if not impossible to discuss Spirito's thought without at the same time paying attention to actual idealism, problematicism, omnicentrism, scientism, neo-problematicism, and antiscientism.

It is not far-fetched to say that together with Benedetto Croce and

Giovanni Gentile, Ugo Spirito held a prominent place among Italian philosophers of the twentieth century. As critical studies on his work increased, his recognition gained an international dimension. However, his intellectual position is complex because it cannot be contained within the Italian philosophical tradition and can only be understood in the context of the other major European philosophers, from Karl Popper to Theodor Adorno to Max Horkheimer. In addition, Spirito's intellectual stature is problematic because he engaged in politics, causing his scientific and philosophical research to take on an experiential dimension. Spirito did not limit himself to abstract investigation by shutting himself off in the ivory tower of academia. He lived his philosophy first by adhering to fascism and becoming one of the most respected intellectuals of the regime, and then by becoming a communist.

Spirito paid a high price for his inspiring principles when they clashed with the official theory of fascism before World War II and then with communism after World War II. Spirito was persecuted twice. First, the fascists accused him of deviation and exiled him to Messina (Sicily) in 1936, placing him under surveillance for his interpretation of the economic doctrine of "corporative ownership," a doctrine with Bolshevik implications because of the identification of the interest of the working class with those of the owners. Second, the communists never forgave him for his past fascist militancy and his elaboration of a fascistic communism. Spirito stated on many occasions that from the beginning he was a communist tainted with fascism: "I am and I am not a fascist, in the same way that I am and am not a communist. I was already a communist in 1932, when at a conference on corporativism, I proposed the abolition of private ownership."[1]

Spirito's career officially began in 1921 at age twenty-five when Giovanni Gentile asked him to direct the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, a journal which would become the organ of the actual idealist philosophy. Spirito's first meeting with the Sicilian philosopher Gentile took place in 1918 at the University of Rome where Gentile was teaching philosophy. At that time, Spirito embraced actual idealism, becoming Gentile's favorite disciple, but his later personal and professional relationship with him became rather uneasy. While Gentile's actual idealism was the perfect outlet for Spirito, it was not his first philosophical-spiritual creed. Spirito had already been a longstanding student of Italian positivist philosophy. Although positivism stressed the importance of documentation and facts, it banished metaphysics from its investigation and declared philosophy useless. For the young Spirito, positivism was a kind of secular religion that satisfied his anxiety about the absolute, an anxiety previously satisfied by Catholicism.

Spirito's subsequent university studies on criminal anthropology and economics inspired his first doubts about the ability of the positivist school of thought to capture the essence of reality. He discovered an internal antinomy within positivism that could not be resolved into a single

universal principle. How can we explain the opposition between the individualistic and selfish component of the free-enterprise system defended by Maffeo Pantaleoni and Enrico Ferri's social and collectivistic approach to criminal anthropology, which absolves the criminal of the crime? Spirito concluded that the absolute certainty claimed by positivism led to contradictory results, which were difficult to resolve. For Spirito, the weakness of positivism was intellectualism, a mental scheme by which the subject establishes a rapport with a reality that remains external to the subject and cannot be resolved within that person, resulting in separation and conflict between the subject and the object. This generated a fracture in the consciousness of the individual who is confronted with a reality he or she cannot dominate.

This initial antinomic and anti-intellectualistic tension was at the root of Spirito's undergraduate thesis on pragmatism, which he wrote in less than a year and published in 1921 as *Il pragmatismo* (*Pragmatism*). This early work revealed some of the themes upon which Spirito would concentrate in his future philosophical investigations, including the problem of science and its relationship to philosophy and the fundamental theme of all his investigations—the neverending search for the truth, for the "incontrovertible," for the absolute. This continuous search allowed him to avoid a simplistic adherence to any general theory or system pretending to resolve the problem of existence. In this sense, the opposition was defined; the antinomy arose between the search for the overall meaning of existence and for a theoretical and ideological system that definitively responded to such a search. The presence of this antinomic structure in Spirito's thought was the key to his speculative itinerary. Even pragmatism, notwithstanding its anti-intellectualistic character and the priority given to the "I"—the subject—was incapable of attaining the absolute, because the function of the "I" remained vague and unspecified, too tied to the psychological dimension. In pragmatism, the subject was unable to attain the certainty of truth but reverted to a dualistic position, denying the absolute value of its conclusions.

Within Gentile's emerging philosophy of actual idealism, Spirito first found the possibility of resolving the antinomy and consequently of attaining the absolute. This philosophical system claimed to be the realization of absolute immanentism in which the distinction between earthly and celestial reality was resolved and the knowledge of the object was made possible through the subject—the consciousness that the subject has of the object. In this philosophical system, therefore, metaphysics was "actualized" within reality and not outside of the object. The subject was no longer limited to the psychological dimension, as in the case of pragmatism, but it was the revelation of the absolute "I" within the process of its creation of reality. The subject was the thought that knows itself (as in the theory of self-awareness) in the moment in which through the act of thinking it creates both itself and reality. The thought was the act defining everything but

could not itself be defined. From this speculative process derived remarkable consequences affecting every aspect of reality.

For the young Spirito, the fundamental concepts at the core of actual idealism were: (1) humanity is the creator of its own world, of the whole world, so life is seen as absolute humanism; and (2) knowledge is identified with action, philosophy is identified with life. This last element added a new ethical dimension to life: philosophy was the very value of life and constituted the basis for the identification of science with philosophy, which still needed to be proven. Spirito, not Gentile, demonstrated the metaphysical roots of the individual sciences—the philosophical character of science and the unification of the two forms of knowledge in a systematic and organic manner—in essays appearing in the journals *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* and *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica*, which he founded and directed with Arnaldo Volpicelli from 1927 to 1935. In these essays, Spirito identified the missing link in a system seeking to provide a full and organic understanding of reality. For Spirito, all aspects of reality, including science, were spiritualized and became an aspect of the realization of the human spirit in the world and, therefore, in history. He spoke of a "constructive" actual idealism within actual idealism—not an abstract theory, but the human spirit in action in the concrete experience. Spirito's embrace of fascism, which he saw as a movement and as a political system favoring the realization of human creativity, was a consequence of the identification of philosophy with life and history. Spirito believed the fascist ethical State was created by individuals—by the spirit of every person who identifies with the state and recognizes himself or herself within it. In this manner, the antithesis between the individual and the State was at last conquered.

Spirito's disillusionment with fascism occurred when it abandoned the most revolutionary positions of actual idealism in the field of the education and sociopolitical activities. First, with the approval of the Vatican Agreements in 1929, and then, with the condemnation of his elaboration of the "corporative ownership" theory. Spirito realized actual idealism could not offer a complete explanation of reality. Inconsistencies also emerged from within this system preventing the attainment of the absolute truth. For Spirito, the philosophical crisis became a crisis involving political values. As a result, "problematicism," initially understood as a "problem" rather than as a movement, emerged as the awareness of an existential dissatisfaction with metaphysics, permeating actual idealism in an immanentistic sense. According to Emanuele Severino, Spirito's "investigation moved in the same direction as the rest of contemporary philosophy—aimed at freeing the becoming of reality from the permanent state that rendered it impossible."[2]

Spirito's *La vita come ricerca* was the philosophical landmark that signaled this new investigative direction and turned the function of the centrality of the "I" upside down. In this book, Spirito explained, "to think"

no longer meant to judge, to reach a synthesis that would resolve the antinomy, as Gentile had said, but "to object," "not to know," "to make the antinomy more acute."[3] For Spirito, a new equally valid negation opposed every statement. Truth and error no longer could be defined with certainty. Every solution became a new problem. Any truth or synthesis was challenged by another thought that indicated its partiality. For the first time, Spirito admitted it was impossible to know reality through the "I." It was not possible to identify philosophy with science, because science led to a truth "*in fieri*"—truth as a continuous search—while philosophy claimed possession of the absolute. The expression, "I don't know," which was at the core of his argument, simply denied both. These antinomic conclusions found further articulation in *Il problematicismo* (*Problematicism*, 1948). Spirito used a systematic form of criticism that he called "hypercriticism" and applied it to all aspects of reality. Though Spirito reached conclusions marked by a relativistic vision of reality, he never wholeheartedly embraced the dogmatic and absolutist nature of problematicism nor the notion that the human intellect was unable to lift itself to perennial truth. Spirito's attempts to escape this philosophical impasse resulted in the publication of two books with different philosophical points of reference: *La vita come arte* (*Life as Art*, 1941) and *La vita come amore* (*Life as Love*, 1953).

In *La vita come arte*, Spirito sought a way to overcome problematicism and to reach the certainty of the absolute by exploring the artistic tension of the romantic genius. He realized, however, that artists, insofar as they lived in the immediacy of the moment and in the particularity of their intuitions, could not embrace the whole because their artistic efforts were a negation of universality and an affirmation of individuality. The antinomy of art and life remained unsolvable and the problem remained open.

In *La vita come amore*, Spirito tried to overcome the limitations of individualism by attributing to the subject the necessity of shifting the ultimate purpose of life from the individual to society—the latter perceived as totality of the real, as the consciousness of the universe, as history in the making. Individual life needed to be integrated into a life spent in solidarity with others, grounded not in the centrality of the "I," but in a love that absorbed "mine" into "yours." In this sense, Spirito condemned Western civilization—embodied by the Christian conception of life as too corrupted by intellectualism—separating subject from object, knowledge from action. Consequently, Western understanding of love is founded on the law of love, on judgment, on sanction, and on condemnation, rather than on love itself. According to Spirito, this shortcoming explained the emergence of Marxism, which attempted to interpret the new dimension of love through the identification of knowledge with action, but was unable to do so. By promoting class struggle, by "feeding the pride of the proletarian class, by proclaiming the proletariat as the subject, that is, as the 'I' and by placing it ahead of the bourgeois class, which becomes the 'you,' the other," Marxism revealed its grounding in individualism.[4] Much like Christianity, Marxism

promoted the condemnation rather than the understanding of others, the law of love instead of love itself—a narrow approach to the interpretation and resolution of the problems of reality. As a consequence, Marxist metaphysics remained in the realm of traditional metaphysics, based, as it was, on intellectualism, on the separation of reality in subject and object, and on the duality of knowledge and action. Spirito's alternative was to understand love not as a commandment, which in this case implied a value judgment and was transformed into condemnation, but as a factual reality, a functioning principle growing out of "not knowing" and denying value judgments, condemnation, and the law of love. He wrote, "A society of love can only be established when men persuade themselves that they do not know."[5] Spirito seemed to resolve the antinomy. However, his conception of love revealed an internal unresolved conflict, for on the one hand he denied the value judgment, while on the other hand, he did not reject negative judgments with respect to Christianity and Marxism. In the end, Spirito failed to overcome the antinomic state.

Spirito's inability to overcome the antinomy found further proof in his exploration of the hypothesis of omnicentrism as elaborated in the essay "Dal problematicismo all'onnicentrismo" ("From Problematicism to Omnicentrism," 1959) (included in *Inizio di una nuova epoca* [*Beginning of a New Era,* 1961]). As Spirito said, this hypothesis was developed, "in concomitance with the international relativistic currents of contemporary thought" and aimed at reaching a more profound analysis of the concept of relativism, implicit in problematicism.[6] In an effort to demonstrate how a new formulation of this concept could lead to the overcoming of relativism itself, and possibly, to reach an absolute truth, Spirito thought it necessary to show how there emerges from relativism its complete opposite: that is, the absolute. He would therefore abandon the notion of "I don't know" (which constituted the foundation of his problematicism), to ask if it was possible to doubt and "not know." For him, the answer was categorical: "life, that is the 'word,' is a radical act of affirmation to the point that I can doubt everything and everybody, but I cannot doubt the criterion by which I doubt and that elevates the doubt itself to the dimension of absolute knowledge. Therefore, I know: there is no way I cannot know. I must know. Consequently, the fundamental principle of problematicism finds itself overturned."[7]

> The omnicentric hypothesis emerges at his point. According to this hypothesis, each and every word, each and every determination of the universe, is a manifestation of the whole within it implicit, a unity of microcosm and macrocosm. In the act of pronouncing a word, my entire reality, and therefore the entire reality of which I am a manifestation, takes life in that word—and only in that word. In turn, that word, because of its connection with the whole, cannot help but have absolute value, and actually be absolute itself.[8]

If a word was absolutely valid in itself, then so each system founded upon it also presented equal validity. In this way, not only each individual, but every aspect of reality became the center of the very same reality, transforming itself in an omnicentrist hypothesis. There are as many truths as individuals, and each one of them is indistinctly able to both annihilate and continuously regenerate itself. Thus, Spirito gave equal importance to each hypothesis and consequently could not discard any of them due to the principle of "nonexclusion" by which omnicentrism asserted itself. This principle was based on two conflicting aspects: "exclusion (each hypothesis ignores every other hypothesis while asserting itself); and inclusion (each hypothesis includes all other hypotheses accepting, among others, even the one that represents its very negation.")[9] Therefore, the omnicentrist hypothesis simultaneously led to both the possession of the truth and to its negation, so that each individual hypothesis transformed itself into a new point of departure for a new search. The problem remained and the antinomy continued to dominate Spirito's philosophical beliefs.

The resolution of the antinomy materialized when Spirito realized that new scientific demands emerged from problematicism. The extraordinary results reached by science after World War II, as well as his personal studies on cybernetics, led Spirito to reinvestigate the relationship between science and philosophy. In the essay, "L'avvenire della scienza" ("The Future of Science," 1959) [included in *Inizio di una nuova epoca*] and in his book *Dal mito alla scienza* (*From Myth to Science*, 1966), Spirito elaborated a different concept of science, leading to a new identification of science and philosophy as a single form of knowledge. For him, convergence was possible only if science was recognized as metaphysics and if science was capable of satisfying the requirements of philosophy. Spirito elaborated a theory that contrasted with the one he developed during his years of militant actual idealism when the identification of science with philosophy was only one part of the subjectification process by which all aspects of reality were reduced to the "I."

According to Spirito in "Avvenire della scienza," all attempts to justify a metaphysics of science failed in spite of all the efforts made by the positivist philosophers in this direction. In their systems, the duality between knowledge and action remained unchanged. Now for him, the metaphysics of science becomes the principle of identifying knowledge with action, developed centuries earlier by Giambattista Vico, and is realized in the "consensus" that scientists reach in their investigations. The dissensions within the scientific community do not constitute true dissent, for they do not lead to division but to a higher degree of truth since the hypotheses upon which the scientific investigation is based eventually are proven valid or not. This is a necessary moment in the process that leads to the truth. The truth, then, can no longer be seen as a "possession," as was the case in traditional philosophy, but as an "investigation." The difference between the truth of the scientists and the truth of the philosophers is "the

philosophers presume to possess the truth without forging it, while the scientists know and forge the truth" since they can verify it with experimentation.[10] Consensus, therefore, is "proof of true knowledge and the presumed philosophical truth, insofar as it does not result in consensus, is not truth.[11] While philosophy divides, science aspires to be one and becomes the element that "unifies the life of the world and allows different people to realize common experiences."[12]

Since scientific knowledge does not possess the whole, due to its nature as a continuous search, it is knowledge limited to the part which, however, incorporates the whole that implicitly lives within it. It [scientific knowledge] does not lead to relativism, if relativism is defined as the impossibility of reaching the truth, and, therefore, a simplistic form of negation as traditional philosophy claimed. According to Spirito, the scientific relativism "has as its only goal that of showing the relative state of the various phenomena in their reciprocal relationships according to the criteria, which by transcending the relativity of the phenomena themselves, indicate the laws governing them. Scientific relativism is aimed at the ultimate conquest of the relative. Only in this manner can the consensus reached among scientists be explained."[13] As a consequence, "each individual science manages to live autonomously...[since] each is already the science of the whole."[14] In the conquest of a partial truth, each science finds in itself the consciousness of the universal value of its own speculative method. As a result, "the method and the metaphysics of immanence find in science their effective realization."[15]

Philosophy, having lost its role as interpreter of the whole, becomes meaningful only if it transforms itself into a particular science, and if, as one of the many sciences, it incorporates the whole within it immanent so that its task would be that of investigating the whole according to its own particularities. In this way, philosophy would identify itself with science and both would be transformed into a single expression of knowledge.

At this point, it is essential for Spirito "to further articulate the metaphysical content of science to produce a systematic conception of reality."[16] This content is based on a moral conception of reality that finds immediate manifestation in the behavior of the scientist who is presented as a new human model whose actions are based on the Christian principle of nonjudgment. "Scientists must not choose, they must accept everything and assume that everything is on the same level."[17] Spirito goes on to say, "not that scientists must never investigate, examine, analyze, reflect and therefore judge, but the judgments must be positive and must lead to further understanding."[18] As a consequence, he elaborates a new humanism based on science and technique, which he calls the humanism of work.

Dal mito alla scienza represented the culminating moment of the post-problematic resolution: "[This book], indeed, was an explicit act of faith in science."[19] In this book, Spirito continued to delve deeply into the metaphysical position by demonstrating how it was scientific. To show two

aspects of the same issue, Spirito demonstrated metaphysics as science in much the same way that he demonstrated science as metaphysics in "Avvenire della scienza." He used science to demonstrate the "incontrovertibility"—the absolute—as well as, the existence of a single form of scientific knowledge because philosophical knowledge is resolved within it.

To support this theory, Spirito developed concepts only hinted at in the previous essay, above all, the concept of science understood as a "hypothetical truth," which he transformed into "hypothesism" (the theory according to which every scientific statement is hypothetical because it is founded upon the limited experience of the part.) The fundamental principle of hypothesism was "nonexclusion." As Antonio Russo stated, it was "the greatest open-mindedness in which no experience is excluded *a priori*."[20] This hypothetical condition was permanent since it is impossible to exhaust the horizons of the relationships between phenomena. Not only that, but for Spirito, "No...statement can be definitive. Everything must be conceivable as a possible negation. Even the minimal exception to this rule cannot help but invalidate its scientific character."[21] The insistence on the concept of hypothesis did not permit a lapse into antinomy because it led to the verification of a novel hypothesis and to the affirmation of a novel aspect of truth tied to the preceding hypothesis, though different from it. The latter represented a transition from a vague to a less vague hypothesis, betraying the "superior criticism of scientific metaphysics."[22] Such metaphysics posited itself as both the truth and the nontruth, as a continuous search for truth. In Russo's words, "complementary terms coexist in the same concept of hypothesis and find their quality in an omnicentric hypothesism."[23] Scientific metaphysics led us to identify science with philosophy in as much as philosophy becomes science through the inherent process of hypothesizing. "As we all know, the object of philosophy is the *whole*, thus with regard precisely to such universal inquiry, philosophy distinguishes itself from science, whose object of inquiry is the *part*. But what is the whole sought by philosophy?"[24] Spirito rejected the rational interpretation of the whole as "a virtual knowledge of reality, of its principle and its unity" and saw the whole as "knowledge and analysis of the problem of the whole; only then philosophy becomes an individual science, equal to other sciences and with the same content."[25] As a consequence, "the metaphysical question, the most important question, will not pertain to philosophy any more than it pertains to other sciences, and thus philosophy will no longer be able to claim a privileged status."[26] Philosophy appropriated the claim of hypothesis held by science and through assimilation, philosophy and science became a single form of knowledge.

With the identification of philosophy and science, emerged "a scientific future for the world and a hypothesis of a reality of tomorrow defined by the scientific–technical progress."[27] Spirito excluded everything representing an alternative to science, including antiscience, because science "is absolutized as the only form of knowledge" and, therefore, is capable of ab-

sorbing all that science is not.[28] For a moment, the antinomic rhythm quieted down. However, faith in science soon began to waiver due to Spirito's thought process. He never presumed to conquer the truth but rather continued to develop his own principles by constantly rethinking them. In addition, outside influences contributed to the antinomic tension. These influences arose as a result "of a hypercritical thought process within the new generations the aim of which was to dissolve the entire value system of the present world, science included."[29]

Although some of the concepts were anticipated in Spirito's essay "L'unificazione del sapere" ("The Unification of Knowledge," 1956), Spirito's revision of the concept of science culminated in *Storia della mia ricerca* (*History of My Search*, 1971) where he reconsidered the antinomic process that characterized problematicism, even if this new problematicism could not help but differ from the previous version. Spirito did not doubt the fundamental meaning of science as a critical and rational procedure capable of generating a widespread consensus, nor the existence of a single form of knowledge. However, he wanted to see if "there exists a nonscientific reality that can be considered as an alternative to science and constitutes another direction for human activity."[30] Spirito was not dealing with the previous problematicism, which repudiated the identification between science and philosophy and postulated two different forms of knowledge, but rather a new problematicism which was defined as "scientific," insofar as it emerged from within a "scientific metaphysics" and in which "the field of investigation was by far broader and superior."[31] The antinomy no longer involved science versus philosophy, but rather science versus antiscience. Spirito realized antiscience was possible, since, in spite of the advanced degree of scientific development in present society, manifestations antithetical to the scientific perspective, such as Catholicism's unwillingness to accept scientific conclusions and the persistence of superstition (exemplified by the many people who follow their horoscopes) persisted. "The more science insists on using its 'hypotheticity,' the more it stimulates the pursuit of antiscientific forms of knowledge."[32] Spirito realized "in today's world, two antithetical principles, which cannot be reduced to a single unity, exist." For him, the antinomy not only reappeared, it constituted "the present essence of society."[33]

These attributes of the new problematicism appeared because "the concept of investigation overcame the limitations of a definite research, present in the first version of problematicism and aimed at finding a solution for the antinomy between science and philosophy; and it was strengthened by the variety of all possible experiences in every conceivable direction" through the systematic application of the principle of nonexclusion.[34] In opposition to science, therefore, was antiscience, which because of the force of its negation, constituted a virtual alternative to science and no longer allowed for "a definite and univocal prediction" of reality.[35] Therefore, the presence of two antithetical metaphysical principles

did not allow for the attainment of the absolute. The state of crisis, which derived from this situation, was not limited to knowledge alone, but involved all other human activities in such a manner that everything became "problematic" (including the meaning of life) while the incontrovertible and the absolute were replaced by a "sense of mystery that, wrapping itself around us, became so profound as to no longer allow us to make predictions preferable to the previous ones."[36] As a consequence, after so many intellectual vicissitudes, Spirito returned to the most negative moments of *La vita come ricerca.* Upon rethinking his philosophical journey, Spirito said, "Problematicism, which began as a derivation of actual idealism, ended by progressively stripping itself of every faith in the absolute. The same faith in science also contended with antiscience, and because it could not escape this dilemma, it broadened the field to the point that problematicism itself became scientific."[37]

If faith in science revealed itself to be an illusion for Ugo Spirito, so did faith in self-awareness and in the centrality of the human being in the world —two of the main tenets of his early philosophical beliefs in actual idealism, which he discussed in the essay "Fine dell'autocoscienza" ("End of Self-Awareness," 1970) [included in *Storia della mia ricerca*]—arriving at a negative conclusion about the possibility of reaching any durable truth. The essay is a poignant illustration of "the inability of individuals to either understand or orient themselves, as they progressively lose control of their own ideas and actions."[38] The Socratic statement "know thyself," which had been at the core of Western civilization and found its most profound and complex elaboration in the theory of self-awareness, lacks all foundation, leaving human beings in a state of existential anguish and spiritual void. Self-awareness and its ability to create and know the world, let alone to create it, are only illusions: "Between the human being and the world there emerges a dualism that causes him to contemplate the world with stupefied expectation."[39] For Spirito, life remains an enigma, which escapes any attempt made by a philosopher to try to crystallize it into a system or formula. With this final revisitation of actual idealism, Spirito's investigative parable comes full circle.

At this point, Spirito was unable to go on. There was nothing left for him to do but to scrutinize and reevaluate his long philosophical career (*Dall'attualismo al problematicismo* [*From Actual Idealism to Problematicism*, 1976]), and to recount the most meaningful moments of his life with the profound emotion of an eighty-year-old man who had reached the end of his journey with *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century*, 1977.

I decided to translate *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century* because the book recounts Ugo Spirito's lifelong intellectual quest, allowing the reader to capture the author's present state of mind, which he characterized as one of total "unawareness." This book highlights the author's past—rich in historical and intellectual events—but includes the moral tension missing in his other memoir, *Storia della mia ricerca*, written in a more intellectual

and doctrinal manner. This filled *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century* with a sense of a final spiritual testament. Spirito was able to carry out the life he had envisioned in his earlier years as an actual idealist by placing his intellectual quest in a historical context founded on the identity of theory and practice, knowledge and action, and philosophy and politics. However, due to the antinomic structure of this thought, the results of this identity ultimately led Spirito to the negation of the possibility of reaching any truth and eventually to the negation of any value worth fighting for. *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century* will appeal not only to philosophers and scholars of twentieth-century history, but also to the general reader, since it can be viewed as a tormented representation of the life of an entire century.

Memoirs of the Twentieth Century is divided in two parts, each containing six chapters in chronological order and according to intellectual development. The first part is the most doctrinal and marks the major stages in the evolution of Spirito's thought and his involvement in the historical and political movements of his time, namely fascism and communism. It also attests to his estrangement from both movements. The second part is devoted to important figures in twentieth-century Italian political life whose paths intersected with the author: Giovanni Gentile, Benito Mussolini, Giuseppe Bottai, Palmiro Togliatti, and Pope Paul VI.

The first two chapters are noteworthy as they outline the development of Spirito's thought up to his last work. After a fifty-year search for the truth and near the end of his life, Spirito, became convinced that it was impossible to attain certainty, truth, or a solid sense of self-awareness. The "I" was no longer the center of reference for reality, its function downgraded. There ensued what he called "unawareness," meaning "man cannot know himself [for] self-awareness is only an illusion."[40] Far from being "the crafter of his own destiny" as he proclaimed during the phase of actual idealism of his youth, Spirito saw himself as the product of external forces, a container holding an enormous quantity of experiences absorbed with curiosity and faith, but without the power to control them. Now, faith disappeared. A feeling of impotence seized him and those like him who sensed the impossibility to influence the development of events. He stated, "I didn't make myself, but was made by a world that became part of me and nurtured me. If I were to give a name to the transcendental force which lent content to my person, I would call it 'luck.'"[41]

Accordingly, instead of "an autobiography of a person who claims to be responsible for himself," this book tries to demonstrate "why he does not know how to give an account of himself and does not know how to offer reasons for his own life."[42] Spirito believed he was more or less on the same level as those who regard themselves existentialists. However, his problematicism was more pessimistic, since it was more securely anchored to relativism and to the end of every possible incontrovertibility. After spending his life focussing on the incontrovertible truth, Spirito realized that he had instead reached the negation of the metaphysics of unawareness—a

negative unawareness excluding the possibility of attaining the absolute with the human intellect.

Spirito talked in apocalyptic terms: he saw the future marked by a permanent crisis. "If someone were to ask about the dimension of this drama, it could be difficult to give a definite answer. It would be only possible to say that a very profound historical change was taking place. The problem of unawareness is still in the background of our philosophical search, but its consequences already appear on the horizon with decisive force. The drama is worldwide even though it has yet to reach its true identity."[43] For Spirito, then, the past must be revisited with explicit finality to "pinpoint the reasons for its unavoidable negation."[44]

Following the initial chapters, the narration broadens and individual experience becomes the "testimony of a century."[45] Spirito saw his life as exemplary of many other intellectuals of his generation, who though more obscure than he, were similarly shaped by the collision of external forces and by uncontrollable historical events. His life was distinguished by a less than brilliant college experience; an unexpected high point in the final college exams; the call from Gentile to direct *La Critica*; and by the conversion from Catholicism to positivism, dictated by the spirit of the times.

Beginning with Chapter Three, "Fascism," Spirito's attitude becomes more historiographic. He reconstructs his relationship with actual idealism and with fascism, which he initially saw as the historical realization of the principles of Gentile's actual idealism. He relives an intense intellectual activity led by Gentile to which he contributed a series of works on liberal economy and, in particular, on "corporative ownership." He outlines the evolution of actual idealism and fascism toward a vision of a State with exclusive and absolute authority.[46] Finally, he indicates that the experiment ended due to a lack of will by the heads of the regime to take the path of "corporativism." This development marked his disassociation with fascism and the birth of problematicism.

In Chapter Four, Spirito traces his relationship with communism, which he elevated to the rank of "metaphysics" and, therefore, to the dimension of the incontrovertible, a continuation of his revolutionary fascism. "My fascism was my communism," he wrote.[47] Communism was an "ideal of life enlightened by the overcoming of individualism."[48] For Spirito, however, even historical communism was moving toward the bourgeoisie and toward neo-capitalism. His disappointment regarding the historical manifestations of communism "marked the end of the metaphysics of problematicism."[49]

In Chapters Five and Six, Spirito brings to light the persecution he first suffered at the hands of the fascists, including the loss of his professorship in corporative studies and his forced move to a secondary teaching post at the University of Messina; and secondly, at the hands of the Commission of Political Purges, when after the fall of fascism, he was allegedly accused of being an "apologist of the regime." These are the two most heartfelt chapters written by Spirito, whose conscience as a thinker underlined his own

steadfast adherence to the fundamental convictions emerging from his intellectual prowess. His confinement to Messina produced *La vita come ricerca*, which marked his abandonment of fascism and actual idealism, "the end of the faiths which shaped twenty years of search," and the birth of problematicism.[50]

In the second part of the book, Spirito defends his adherence to his personal convictions through a series of descriptions of relationships with key personalities of his time, most of them adversaries. A strong polemic tone, permeated by irony and sarcasm, serves as the means for his desire to place himself on the right side of history. Spirito makes clear the importance his relationships with Mussolini, Giovanni Gentile, and Benedetto Croce had from an historical point of view, especially the history of Italian culture. His tormented relationship with Gentile and Croce sheds light on what is, as yet, an unresolved chapter of the history of Italian philosophy: the rapport between Croce and Gentile. Spirito overturned the widely accepted notion that Gentile was Croce's disciple, by demonstrating that, from a philosophical point of view, Gentile was the teacher while Croce was the student.

PART I

Autobiography

One

WITNESSING A CENTURY

To comprehend the significance of this autobiography, you must place yourself in the psychological situation of someone who has personally witnessed the historical events of an entire century. While it is true I was born in 1896 and my experience only covers a span of eighty years, I was strongly influenced by my father who was born in 1854. In 1896, the year I was born, he was already forty-two years old and had lived most of his life in the harshest and most backward regions of Southern Italy, in large part an area retaining the characteristics of a more primitive world. I too lived in that Italy until I entered the university in 1914. As a result, for a long time my experience was bound up in the environment of the past century, with all the problems, traditions, and customs of that era. My ongoing discussions with my father strengthened this bond, often transporting me to the Naples of Francesco De Sanctis where my father studied engineering and became involved in the philosophical inquiries that have long been pursued in that city.

Therefore, when I claim to have experienced a century, I believe I can do so legitimately despite the twenty-year discrepancy. This is all the more convincing because my youth was spent in the provinces of Caserta [Campania] and Chieti [Abruzzi], which only slowly succeeded in adjusting to the progressive pace of the more advanced provinces.

My life story is unique for yet another reason. One way of living looks primarily at the past and settles passively into a more or less conformist existence, while another consciously projects itself toward the future and is permeated by the anxious expectation of what that future will bring. My life is inspired by the latter, since my main concern is with the future. Eyewitness to a century, true, but I also view the reality that awaits us with great anticipation. I look at the past with relative indifference; my main psychological motive is expectation.

These may sound like general and vague considerations, but their aim is to give some idea of the life they reflect. That is, they are the foundation upon which my search has been shaped. When an old man speaks, it is essential to keep in mind not only his psychological frame of reference with regard to the time and place of his experience, but more importantly, his mental awareness and philosophical interests. All too often, older people appear to be "praisers of times gone by," caught up in the lost world of their youth. A life of memories is often regarded as the most common characteristic of growing old and encourages stereotyped opinions about the way people think when they reach old age. This detached form of reminiscence cannot effectively influence the shape of the future. My story, instead, looks at the past with one specific aim: to find in it only those things that will negate it, and to clarify the reasons for this negation—a

negation that must occur whether it is viewed as constructive or destructive. What prevails is a scientific position, open to everything good and bad bent only on understanding.

The first problem that arises is, of course, how to define the peculiar features of the century. What were the dominant characteristics of this world? How was it different from the rest of the history of civilization? Today, those of us who can ask such questions are privileged in a way unlike people of other ages, since never before had humanity witnessed such radical changes in so short a time. I believe that such a situation may never repeat itself in the future. The changes that have occurred have been so profound that every other reference to the past has no meaning. I saw this with my own eyes throughout an entire century: each forecast made was belied by subsequent events. I found myself facing a reality full of events that seemed inconceivable until the very eve of their occurrence. From the first airplane flight to the invention of the radio, from the introduction of television to the first step on the moon, from World War I to World War II, the unthinkable became reality. The new generations are unaware of this phenomenon and cannot have a sense of its impact. For them everything seems possible; they are no longer capable of being surprised. They await everything with indifference. The century of revolutions has passed. Nothing is significant anymore.

When viewed as a whole, the history of this century amazes us with its impressive events. We lived it from day to day, in the midst of ongoing discoveries that allowed us no time for significant reflection. Every aspect of reality has been transformed through processes of varying depth that have required much effort and sacrifice. We have continuously followed, feared, and hoped for these processes with our endless participation. Our state of mind has always been suspended between affirmation and negation, with an anguish and a joy capable of taking our breath away. Today, none of this can be understood. The century is over, and our ability to experience both suffering and joy has ceased. We are actors and privileged spectators, yet we are almost unable to feel emotions because the era of emotion has passed. Yes, we look to the future because such has always been our task and it fulfills one of our needs. Unfortunately, however, we are reverting to a younger mentality every day. As a consequence, we are becoming skeptical and largely insensitive. We no longer wish for anything any more, because we do not know what to expect.

Consider the Russian revolution. One world ended and another began. The whole world was hopeful and fearful. Everywhere was joy and fear. But with each passing year, hope diminished. Today, people continue to fear and hope; but only for marginal events. Communism is also dying; no longer does anyone see any future in it. Politically, the century has come to an end, and everything has settled into what is called *détente*. Does an ideal still exist that can excite nations? Even the question itself has lost its force. Logic applies to everything else, and the world stops.

The idea that the world has stopped may seem paradoxical and not to be taken seriously, yet how can the world continue to move? Toward whom and toward what? It is true that the century has ended and the vacuum created seems impossible to fill. At the same time, this denial does not seem definitive. No more religion, no philosophy, no political objectives, yet we must look to the future with a sense of expectation. What are we expecting? This is the real problem of our century. In what did we believe during the transformation of reality? If the revolution was of insurmountable magnitude, what did our thinking produce? What was our system of thought? Here the problem becomes more personal, and the response must come from the progress made during the revolution. What did I believe in? Clearly, the transformation must have been accompanied by an intellectual process suitable to the revolution in all its manifestations. I too must have been part of this process, motivated by the need to understand the meaning of the consensus that was emerging. In effect, what existed was a way of thinking that represented an awareness of what was taking place, and philosophy contributed to the development of the events of the time. This system of thought was known as positivism. I embraced it swiftly, after the Catholic upbringing of my adult youth in an extremely conservative family. Positivism was the first credo of my life, experienced with firm conviction until the day I finished law school. In those days, people knew that, more than a philosophy, positivism was a deep conviction that extended itself throughout all levels of society. There was nothing academic nor intellectual about it: it was a spontaneous belief embraced by the masses capable of winning over everyone with the evidence of the facts it championed. It went beyond any theoretical formulation and represented a common-sense truth. It did not distinguish itself from other philosophical positions, because at the time everyone regarded himself as a positivist, even those from very different backgrounds. For instance, even a Franciscan like Father Gemelli, was forced to think like a positivist. The belief in positivism was shared by all social classes with an immediacy that left no room for doubt.

Accordingly, positivism has been the true driving force behind this revolutionary century, well beyond its historical definition. Antipositivism might have appeared to be a critical movement, but as a matter of fact, it only superficially impacted the development of the social sciences. We were all positivists, and with respect to many of our convictions we still are. Later, when the criticism inspired by idealism was able to penetrate the core of positivism, the opposition of idealism to positivism became unconditional. Even so, certain seminal exigencies were kept alive or were rekindled through the assertion of fresh objectives. Those who are now able to reexamine such events realize that they are at once positivists and idealists, and that they have always been so, even when the need to be antipositivists was more decisive and controversial. In the course of time, historical judgment has brought to light different interpretations, but it has been unable to avoid the recurrence of the old problems and the old solutions.

The main reason for such assertions is that scientific progress has been the mark of our century, and as a result influenced the thinking of scholars. The transformation was too great to avoid the involvement of speculative activity. Soon, science and philosophy initiated a process of identification that outlined the requirements for a new orientation in research. The relationship between positivism and the later philosophy of neo-idealism is now regarded as one of reciprocal implications and the cause for unification of the investigative process.

The significance of such a relationship can be traced to the birth, approximately a century ago, of the so-called human sciences. For the human sciences, the definition of what constitutes science and philosophy suddenly became a fundamental and unavoidable problem. Positivism and idealism confronted each other, allowing for the coexistence of opposite and compelling needs. In the same way, science and philosophy must also confront their antithetical positions and transcend them in the quest for a higher unity. The path is long and tortuous, but must be traveled.

When confronted with the emergence of the human sciences, those who believed in positivism found themselves in a very difficult situation. They could neither dismiss the human sciences nor accept their logic, which was at once scientific and philosophical. The problematic relationship between positivism and idealism assumed paramount significance and needed to be resolved in the form of a definitive synthesis. On a personal level, the problem became clear when a casual event led me to move toward the human sciences. The need to give a more rigorous foundation to the principles of criminal law and political economics, which I had studied under Enrico Ferri and Maffeo Pantaleoni, led to my transition from the study of legal science to the study of philosophy. These men were positivists, but my new mentor, Giovanni Gentile, introduced me to idealism. Was the passage from positivism to idealism possible? If so, what would be the consequences? The rest of my life has been spent searching for the solution to this problem. I insist on the importance of this, because through it you can understand both my point of departure and my final destination.

The human sciences with which I was to become acquainted in a positivistic light were criminal sociology and criminal anthropology. Together with experimental psychology, they represented the first human sciences that were moving in this direction. From the start, criminal anthropology emerged as a well-defined science entailing requisites that could not be avoided. In particular, the relationship between soul and body assumed a commanding significance that could not be ignored. Cesare Lombroso had formulated questions, which we had to confront, and in the field of criminal sociology, Enrico Ferri had further developed the principles of positivism using the same logic and responding to the same intrinsic necessities. Since I was to fashion a metaphysical foundation for the problems of criminal law in accordance with my previous studies, I had to take a position regarding this new science. I had already accepted the new

idealism. Indeed, I had already reached such a profound faith in it that I could not disavow it, while on the other hand, I could not disavow the evidence of the new human sciences with which I had become quite familiar as well. As a result, for the first time I found myself in the position of not having to offer a metaphysical answer. I was already involved in writing a *Storia del diritto penale* [*History of Criminal Law*] when I was faced with making a decision that could not be postponed. Since I could not avoid what had become the essence of my intellectual effort, I needed to reach a conclusion.

The conclusion, of course, could not be but radical; it constituted a fundamental problem, the problem of my life. I wrote the final chapter of my *Storia del diritto penale*, "Antropologia criminale e sociologia criminale" ["Criminal Anthropology and Criminal Sociology"], and Gentile published it without hesitation in his journal, *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* in 1925.

In retrospect, I recognize the problematic nature of my work in that it suggests that positivism and idealism reach a common ground. My position was crystal clear. I did not even suspect that the terms I was accepting could not be reduced to one entity. I had no reservations about my judgment, secure in my faith in idealism. Yet what I affirmed contained two intrinsic elements of reasoning that were antithetical in nature. To me, this did not appear contradictory because I had such faith in idealism that I could no longer recognize a more complex truth. When I reissued that chapter, first in 1932, and again in 1974, I published it in its original form without modification of any kind. It marks an important step in my philosophical journey. Above all, it marks the historical milestone reached by the philosophical inquiry in its passage from positivism and the human sciences to the metaphysics of neo-idealism. Positivism and idealism are no longer antithetical and are awaiting a still distant synthesis.

Why had I become an idealist? Was it because I had taken a controversial position with regard to positivism even though no possibility existed of repudiating the human sciences? What was Gentile telling me that positivism could no longer convey? At this point, my response had to be decisive in order for me to understand the sixty-year journey that it would take to reach a conclusion.

Gentile was the philosopher of absolute self-awareness, and his teachings were based on that concept. The strength of this conviction was such that it acquired the invincible *pathos* that emanates from both prophet and apostle. For Gentile, the human being was the creator of the visible world; Gentile's conception of life was that of absolute *humanism*. The whole history of philosophy contributed to the validation of a metaphysics of the self, which in turn proved attractive as a fundamental vision of humanity. The metaphysics of the self would lead to the discovery of everything and would give meaning to our existence. Positivism remained at the perimeter of this proposition, unable to adequately satisfy it. I moved

from the revolution of the century to a personal revolution, which enabled me to generate the energy needed for creative work. This revolution was the result of an internal, not a transcendental force containing a superior positivism within it. This immanent positivism was precisely what endowed idealism with the therapeutic properties my nervous system demanded. In idealism, I found the necessary force to control myself and to be my own master. It was the true metaphysics by virtue of which my life would be redeemed. It was the metaphysics of freedom.

So began my philosophical inquiry, totally absorbed in a sort of idealism whose most abstruse principles evolved into rational, operative tenets offering limitless freedom. Actual idealism meant self-awareness, and the highest form of inquiry coincided with the highest creative power.

True, this philosophy was returning to God and, therefore, to metaphysics. However, God was viewed in immanent and secular terms, such that God did not conflict with the most profound needs of positivism. We could even begin to talk of an *absolute positivism.*

So began my faith in idealism. Actual idealism and the metaphysics of self-awareness had coincided in an absolute way. And I remained an actual idealist for many years, with the same type of faith and with the same ideals. While the problem of the human sciences remained at the periphery of this new philosophy, it was a periphery that was not apparently incompatible with actual idealism. As such, this margin did not impede fashioning a theory of political humanism as Gentile did later. I continued to concentrate on my study of criminal law, but I became progressively more interested in political economics, which had become popular with the institution of the corporative State.

However, at a certain point, my faith in actual idealism became weaker for a host of reasons concerning the basic presuppositions of the idealistic traditions. My faith in idealism, given the growing affirmation of philosophy and science, was weakened by doubts to the extent that little by little I found myself in a precarious situation. Not that I explicitly and totally disavowed it, but I had many different needs that seriously compromised its validity.

The decisive reversal for me occurred in 1937 when I published *La vita come ricerca* [*Life as a Search*], which gave birth to my philosophy called problematicism. For me, the *problem* supplanted the *solution.* My faith was gone. In truth, I could not, of course, speak of the end of actual idealism, because a new life was beginning. This new life was marked by contrasts and was always on the verge of being redeemed by a more or less definitive escape from problematicism. My life became a continuous process of hope and illusion that never solidified into a fulfilling, secure philosophy. Problematicism continually generated reason for dissent, thereby making the effective overshadowing of actual idealism impossible. The logic of the problem was a terrible one because it created an extremely absurd no-win situation. Little by little, the positive became negative, and we searched in

vain for the necessary help to overcome contradictions.

In problematicism, the relationship between positivism and actual idealism acquired a new face, where my first encounter with self-awareness forced me to reevaluate everything. Could the human sciences and the metaphysics of the self be truly reconciled? On the one hand, I had to re-examine the problems of criminal law relative to the principle of accountability, and, on the other hand, the philosophical and pedagogical concepts of the self and of the total responsibility for the world we create. These had been the two points of departure of my intellectual inquiry. Now they were being challenged by two new forms of inquiry. Positivism and actual idealism reached a new critical stage, lending meaning to the process of investigation undertaken before and after *La vita come ricerca*. What had been the *rapprochement* imposed by two different experiences—positivism and actual idealism—in order to solve a metaphysical problem, was now becoming the reason for an epilogue that could not be avoided. It had been a long search that could not find an outlet as long as the two metaphysics remained in their original forms. Now, human sciences and philosophy were rejoined as a single problem, leaving the path open for a feasible solution. The problem concerned the human subject seen in a concrete dimension that went beyond secular traditions. What appeared a matter of negligible importance now became the center of a new philosophical attitude destined to generate a total reversal of the *forma mentis* that characterized the history of civilization. It was no longer possible to correct a process nurtured in inflexible logic; it was a matter of questioning the line of reasoning that had led to the creation of a mythical *subject* and, more importantly, the formulation of *self-awareness*.

Ever since the beginning of my intellectual inquiry, I began confronting the problems associated with criminal law. This task gradually became the main objective of my investigation. The problem could be summed up in this fashion: is the subject the creator of and responsible for his own world? Can he reach full awareness of himself? The problem lay at the heart of Western thought. It had always been resolved in accordance with the tenet *know thyself*, formulated either by Socrates or born within the context of Socratic philosophy. Man must know himself and assume full responsibility for what he thinks and what he does. This is not a philosophical truth, but a truth rooted in human consciousness. It is a discerning truth that reveals the tenets of duty and morality, to which humanity is necessarily bound. Thus, the history of religions and societies have always been grounded in this certainty despite the disparities of scientific concepts and philosophical ideals. The very theory of sin and guilt derives from adherence to this dogmatic principle accepted without reservation. People may abandon a given philosophy, but their customs and daily practices are not exempted from this truth. You need only think of all the criminal codes of the world, of all the political regimes, to be persuaded that the practice in question has been validated throughout the course of centuries. Now, on the other hand, two

new currents of thought have asserted themselves in the fields of science and philosophy, restating the problem in wholly different terms while opening the way for quite a different sort of metaphysics: (1) the ideology that informs the human sciences, and (2) the concept of absolute self-awareness. They are two conceptions apparently opposed to each other, yet destined together to lead to a superior vision of life.

These were the two modes of thought upon which I found myself reflecting when I began my study of criminal anthropology and criminal sociology, and, at the same time, I had occasion to visit jails and mental institutions. I had experienced self-awareness fully and quite fruitfully; thus, I found myself in the situation of having to respond to two sets of convictions. I had chosen a most difficult and problematic path. I could only look to Western philosophy for a solution. In another sense, however, elements of the problem imposed themselves with such compelling force and clarity my customary self-confidence was shaken. I could not cross the threshold of certain conclusions nor could I lose faith in actual idealism, which had been facing serious challenges since 1937. Instead, it was the critical process toward actual idealism that led me to recognize the foundations of the human sciences. It was this very hypostasis of self-awareness that imposed a total reexamination of the metaphysics of the self.

It so happened that in 1973, nearly fifty years after my publication of *Storia del diritto penale*, I felt the need to write a book that would not only take a new look at the problem of criminal responsibility, but would also address the problem of self-awareness. *Storia della mia ricerca* [*History of My Search*] appeared in 1974 and illustrated the road I had traveled. I dealt with criminal law and the end of self-awareness. After half a century, my essays "Antropologia criminale" ["Criminal Anthropology"] and "Sociologia criminale" ["Criminal Sociology"] took a new form and a new conclusion.

In the course of half a century, the human sciences have continued to progress, increasing in number and reaching new depths. Since 1926, I had focused my research on proving the relationship between philosophy and science. I no longer had any substantial need to oppose the conception of the human subject as an expression of the universe in its individual manifestations. From this point of view, the problem of responsibility was no longer problematic and the two-fold problem of punishment and security measures appeared to be definitely resolved.

Gentile's theory of absolute self-awareness, now acquired a revolutionary dimension: observing reality in order to arrive at a reversal of actual idealism. I had once fanatically embraced this philosophy because it helped me to resolve problems related to my personal life. Actual idealism had lost its significance for me so much so that I outrightly rejected it. *Man cannot know himself.* Self-awareness is only an illusion.

This reexamination process has borne a new definition of actual idealism manifested in all aspects of its development. In my book

Dall'attualismo al problematicismo [*From Actual Idealism to Problematicism*] my rejection of actual idealism is examined in the light of Gentile's theories and is subjected to quite a detailed analysis of both its philosophical premises and its various theoretical and historiographical inferences. In *Storia della mia ricerca*, the main chapter, "Fine dell'autocoscienza" ["End of Self-Awareness"], underscores the most drastic assertions regarding self-awareness.

The task I faced was not easy. It involved challenging a psychological situation that was seemingly indisputable. People are convinced that they know themselves and are in charge of their own actions. They are proud of their independence and they claim their own autonomy. How could anyone oppose such a conviction? The observations that can be made in favor of self-awareness are obvious and can be easily analyzed. Besides, Western society is founded upon such a presupposition, and all our patterns of behavior corroborate our need to speak and act as free individuals; that is, as individuals who can agree or disagree. Our value judgments constitute our daily bread and give meaning to our actions. How can we forsake these judgments and how can we set them aside in our relationships with other individuals?

There was only one concrete way to face the issue: to examine my acquired self-consciousness, to question my direct experience to find out how well I know myself. I will no longer consider individuals as generic and illusory abstractions that we can discuss without coming to conclusions. I will no longer be concerned with appearances and opinions. I will instead ask questions directed at myself with only one objective in mind: to strive for greater self-knowledge and self-realization. Who is Ugo Spirito and what is his destiny?

This is how the present book was born. This book is an autobiography, but not the autobiography of a person giving an account of his experiences and suggesting the course of action for the future, which he himself is determined to carry out with the will of a self-assured man. As in the *Storia della mia ricerca*, in this book I continue my examination in order to demonstrate why I cannot explain myself and why I cannot explain my life. I have entitled this book *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century* precisely because I am not the master of myself and I am unable to give explicit direction to my future. I wait and take no decisions. The choices I make do not spring forth from a clear self-awareness, but happen as in a performance acted out behind an unknown curtain.

Memoirs of the Twentieth Century is the result of my having been part of a century, having the ability neither to predict nor control events. It is the life of a man who, as he faces his future, revisits his past, subjecting it to an unintelligible logic. Past and future are two moments in time intertwined into a reality that completely escapes us; by the use of "completely," I mean to affirm the questionable tenet that gives life to the philosophy of problematicism.

Two

THE STATE OF UNAWARENESS

Witnessing the events of an entire century was the prerequisite for a mental state characterized by the uncertainties of an entire lifetime. It has been a century open to an infinite number of experiences that have split in all directions, without polarizing onto any one of them. Anyone desiring self-enrichment who has lived through these experiences without precluding any of them has been overwhelmed by the depth of their revelations. The multi-faceted nature of the experience has precluded any willful exclusion. The dominating characteristic of this century has been an absolute *openness* to all types of experiences and a *curiosity* about everything and everyone. The methodology has been delineated by a series of questions aimed at reaching some sort of truth. We want to know and we want to understand; nothing else can form the foundation of our search.

Curiosity, wonderment, openness, broad-mindedness, and the accumulation of experiences have been the fundamental elements of my journey. I did not invent myself; instead, I was formed by the world that surrounded me. If I were to name this transcendent force, which has provided the content of my personality, I would say that it was *luck*. It was always with me, offering me a gift that exceeded my every desire. I have been shaped by reality and have never been under the illusion that I possess the ability to shape reality myself.

The essential trait of my personality, channeled through a transcendent force, was the *unawareness* through which I came to recognize the different, unexplained components of my being that I did not myself will into existence. All that I have been and that I am was born in me at various turning points of my life, leaving in me only a few occasionally marks. This could be the right time to revisit these turning points in order to confirm the observations I have made so far. My self-discovery involved many aspects of life: from sports to art, music, science, politics, pedagogy, law, economics, sociology, psychoanalysis, and so on. I have tried everything, retaining some things and rejecting others, but always with the enthusiasm of someone who creates and takes pleasure in such creation. I acted according to my instinct with continuous leaps and surprising changes of tastes. My life is the result of a multiplicity of unexpected events and situations that cannot be reduced to a single incident. To remember these events, at least in part, can give meaning to a process whose internal purpose is unidentifiable, serving only to clarify the attribute of unawareness.

My first publication appeared 1 June 1914 on the eve of my high school exams. It dealt with a procedure I had found for obtaining aniline-dyed photographs. This was long before the advent of color photography, and my attempt brought surprise and wonder. I could not judge the merit of the photographs I created, but I was thrilled with the concept and with the

results I attained. I submitted this material to the journal, *Scienze per tutti*, and, to my great satisfaction, I saw my article, "La fotografia a colori con anilina" ["Aniline-Colored Photography"], published in the 1 June 1914 issue. I followed this up with another article on a technique for detaching frescos published two weeks later in the 15 June 1914 issue.

With ever-growing enthusiasm, I then turned to the pursuit of painting, an endeavor to which I dedicated myself for years, with the intention, even, of enrolling in the Academy of the Arts. I was a self-taught artist and found no one to guide or counsel me. At a theater in Chieti, I gave a speech on "Contemporary Italian Painting," which was well-received, although I think this was due solely to the *naïveté* of those present. I was painting portraits, landscapes, and still lifes when I met Francesco Paolo Michetti, but I felt ignorant and unprepared. My mania for painting stayed with me for some years until I entered the university, where I met Mario Praz (among others), who shared my love for painting. Praz, who was familiar with only some of my works, was extremely harsh in his judgment of my ambitions. His recollection of this experience can be found in his book, *La casa della vita* [*The House of Life*].[1] His judgment, and the judgments of others, opened my eyes and gave me proof of my ignorance. As a result, I became brutally destructive and burned all of my many paintings. As a result of this tremendous experience, I no longer have any recollection of my paintings at all. This is one of the best examples of the absurd behavior that would follow in the next years of my persistent illusion. While my ignorant pursuit of painting was no one's fault but my own, it can also be said that no one in the province of Chieti tried to stop me. I especially remember, my high school professors, who full of admiration, encouraged me to continue painting.

During my time at the university—first in law school and later in philosophy—I began to develop interests in a variety of disciplines. The variable and unstable quality of each experience made my research extremely complex—as it still remains now. Even when I was a university professor, the disciplines into which I delved were varied in nature. I taught economics in Law School; pedagogy, philosophy, and the history of philosophy in the School of Education; and, finally, theoretical philosophy in the Department of Literature and Philosophy. When I was a university professor, my enthusiasm continued to grow to the point that it influenced no less than thirty of my students to become university professors.

All this, however, was only one part of my life, because I was also involved in so many other cultural activities. First of all, let me recount my work as an encyclopedist. After having been the editor of many subjects for the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*], I became its general secretary. When Giovanni Gentile died, I began to develop many other specialized encyclopedias for Sansoni Publishing House, the history of which I have recounted in detail in the volume published on the occasion of its centennial. As a writer I created various journals for which I assumed direct

responsibility, the most important being, *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica*, published between 1927 and 1935.

In the last few years, I have devoted much of my energy to my work as a journalist, regularly writing commentaries on daily events from a philosophical point of view. I have also contributed to the field of cinema: first by working on a ministerial commission of cinematic achievement and later by participating in the international festival of Venice in 1971, which I covered daily for the newspaper *Il Gazzettino*.

This gives you a brief overview of my most important activities over the decades, as well as an indication of my commitment to speculative philosophy and to the publication of my works, which were dedicated to the understanding of a constantly evolving central unifying principle.

My curiosity can offer only a vague idea of the multiplicity of my own unstable, restless life. But it is precisely such vague notions of life that render concrete reality so much more far reaching and meaningful. I have always been attracted by the inexhaustible richness of my countless experiences.

With regard to these experiences, I need only to recall my desire to visit the several continents to try to understand the behavior and customs of the entire world. In this manner, I have broadened my political knowledge of various regimes by getting to know so many leaders and dictators.

Yet, even when looking at the various aspects of reality with an open mind, I cannot come up with any all-encompassing result. The same multiplicity of perspectives renders any point of view more confusing and takes away all possibility of reaching a sound judgment upon which to base the synthesis. This state of ignorance increases, and the conditions of problematicism become dominant. Even if problematicism is perhaps itself the result of a synthesis, the process of investigation is stopped due to an inability to transform such a synthesis into something that has a positive and illuminating character. The state of ignorance then increasingly worsens until it turns into aggravation, acquiring a far more important significance: it reveals our daily and absolute personal incapacity to be masters of ourselves. To this end, my life seems a perfect example of the general failure of the forecasts I made during the journey through the fundamental stages that led to my achievements. I have certainly achieved a great deal, but how? Was it a clear procedure, conscious and secure; or have I instead been *led* by reality without my active participation and without my following an agenda? Here the problem of my unawareness clearly reveals itself, illuminated by irrefutable facts.

I must, above all, study in great depth the surprising nature of my experiences by analyzing the most obvious data revealed in the final results. My school life began in negative and alarming terms. I did not know how to be a good student. I was truly incompetent. In my first years at the middle school, I constantly failed. Finally, I had to repeat my entire eighth grade.

The following year, this pattern repeated itself. My grades were a

disaster. I felt doomed. But then, at the end of the second trimester, I received an encouraging score of nine [out of a possible ten] on a written Latin exam. What had happened? I got another nine, and then nine again; my grades became more encouraging. Desiderato Scenna, my professor at the time (who later became one of the mentors of my life), had brought about this miracle: of that there could be no doubt. This sudden transformation could not otherwise be explained logically. The leap was unconscious and has forever remained so. So ended my high school years, and I set off for my studies at the university.

I entered law school chiefly because I was afflicted with a serious nervous disorder that limited my potential. However, law school, at that time, was an easy-going course of study that entailed no risks. Even though I was studying criminal code almost exclusively under the guidance of Enrico Ferri and political economics under Matteo Pantaleoni, things started going badly—and even worsened. As far as any other subject, I was completely incapable of understanding them. My physical condition would not allow it.

I was supposed to graduate during the Christmas break of 1918, after the end of the war. My degree in civil law, with a thesis on "I doveri inerenti al diritto di patria podestà" ["Duties Inherent to Parental Authority"], received an overall grade of 82 out of 100, yet I felt humiliated because I believed that my final grade was bestowed upon me as a generous "gift," reflecting the overall festive mood of the Christmas holiday and the end of the war. I felt a profound blow to my ego, since this degree meant nothing and would offer nothing for my future. I felt the absolute need to prove myself; but how?

I decided to continue my studies by obtaining a second degree, this time in philosophy. The laws at that time allowed me to obtain it within two years but since it was already the end of 1918, the two years of study were actually reduced to only eighteen months so that I could graduate in June 1920. I could not postpone my graduation beyond that date without inflicting an additional burden on my father's very modest economic situation. Therefore, I had to face three exam sessions in a short amount of time: June 1919, October 1919, and July 1920. On top of that, I had to write my senior thesis, "Il pragmatismo nella filosofia contemporanea" ["Pragmatism in Contemporary Philosophy"], a topic barely tolerated by Gentile and Bernardino Varisco.

I began the work toward my second degree with little faith in my ability and an impatience that was the result of time constraints imposed upon me by circumstances. I was obsessed by the idea of finishing by July 1920. My thought process went like this: take many exams in each term; run the risk of receiving Fs; be satisfied with a D; and write the senior thesis as quickly as possible, for which an extensive knowledge of the American and English writings on the subject was required.

I reduced my academic agenda to the bare minimum and began my

preparation. I skimmed through many books in order to orient myself through the material, but I had no guidance or help upon which I could rely. As a result, only vague and disorganized fragments of information remained in my mind. There was no chance at all that I would be able to focus on the information and internalize it.

I took my first set of oral exams in June 1919. I began with the theoretical philosophy exam on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.* I recall barely managing to put together something to say, but I had no real sense of what I was saying. The exam ended, and I waited outside the door for the bell to ring. I entered the room. I received a score of 30 [out of 30], *cum laude*, an A+.

Naturally, I have no exact recollection of what I felt but, certainly, I must have been amazed. What could have bridged the gap between what I expected and what I received? This same phenomenon was repeated in each of the other exams. What had happened? What could such a surprise mean?

Though many years have passed, even today I am not able to comprehend the true reality of the facts. It is certain that my preparation was quite superficial and general. It is certain that I had not studied in a manner appropriate to the importance of the exams. It is also certain that I could not manage to justify my answers to myself. I felt they were inadequate. So, how was I to judge what was happening? The shock turned into astonishment. Yet, I have told these events with complete objectivity. This happened over and over again, continuously confirming my analysis. These events could not be viewed as isolated incidents, because the repetition assumed an inevitable quality. There had to be a deeper meaning to these surprises.

Within a few weeks, the surprise became even more unbelievable. Gentile called me and said: "Dear Spirito, I am about to create a new journal, *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, and I want you to assume the position of editor-in-chief so that you can follow its fate from the inception." He immediately gave me several books to review. Among them, I remember in particular a critical edition of George Berkeley's work by Giovanni Amendola. A new life began for me. Shortly thereafter, Gentile assigned me the task of writing an article for the journal, *Rivista di cultura*, which he edited with Cesare De Lollis. My article was actually published as an editorial article in an issue.

Even today I do not understand how this happened. What is important is that Gentile made his decision about me without ever having read a line of my writing. His confidence in my ability, therefore, was based entirely on the results of my exams, which I completed in October 1920 when I was nominated assistant to Professor Luigi Credaro of the Department of Education at the University of Rome.

In the meantime, in July 1920, I received my Bachelor of Arts *magna cum laude*; the year after the volume on *Il pragmatismo nella filosofia contemporanea* [*Pragmatism in Contemporary Philosophy*] was edited and

received its first review in an article published by Ernesto Buonaiuti in the journal *Tempo*. Thus, even though I had anticipated quite a mediocre future, I entered the world of philosophy, literally *discovered* by Gentile and exceeded even my own expectations and imaginings. I had fully anticipated a quite mediocre future, with no hope of an academic career.

My utter surprise at each of my successes, however, was the result that I had never had any dreams. By not having dreams, I could, therefore, never be disappointed. *Luck* has been a key element in my life—both for good and evil.

The rest of my life has been illuminated by this same light, and the many changes that occurred to me could not have been foreseen until the last moment. An example of this is the uproar I caused by participating in the congress on corporativism in 1932. What can I say about the antifascist persecutions following the end of World War II?

These events illustrate my lack of awareness of life's many different aspects and different levels, and this without even taking into account the personal circumstances that accompanied my practical decisions.

I own a black book that contains all my finances from the moment I earned my first 75 lire for private lessons in 1920. Everything has been recorded there, month after month, year after year, to the point that all my vicissitudes can more or less be garnered from it. I have earned and saved a considerable amount in the most varied and least imaginable ways, but never in the ways that at times have been attributed to me. For example, it has been alleged that I received earnings from Sansoni Publishing House. In reality, during the thirty-two years that I worked with Sansoni after the death of Gentile, I never received a single penny of wages. I have contributed to the founding of many encyclopedias (a millionaire enterprise), but I never kept even the smallest percentage for myself. I did not want my work to be linked to profit. I do not know if I have acted wisely or not by such conduct, but this is the simple truth.

As for the rest of my earnings and savings, from my bachelor days to my current advanced age, the only thing I can say is I no longer own anything to show for what I have built. My brothers and nephews can attest to my continuous *squandering* of the fruits of my labor. I say squandering because even here a lack of awareness has always characterized my decisions. Even though I thought I loved owning material things, as soon I acquired them I ended up giving them away. Of the few things I inherited from my parents, nothing remains in my possession for they are in the homes of my relatives, who lovingly cherish them. Everything that I have earned has been dispersed in the same manner as the several apartments I owned—including one at the Roma-Lido—which I gave away. Even the pleasant vineyard I bought with one of my nephews near Fiumicino [Rome] and the beautiful villa my wife, Gianna, and I built near Todi [Umbria] were sold soon after we acquired them. Today, everything is gone. I own only my books.

No logical thread seems to connect all the aspects of my life. Not even my generosity, which has never been for me a dominating motivation, can be considered a unifying motive. It is all just another proof of the unpredictable, irrational, and rapid succession of the events of my life. This is the way it was. My black book does no less than document this.

According to the above examples, which I have cited with the greatest objectivity, the lack of awareness about how these things came about in my life may appear extrinsic and excessive; however, in reality, it represents the content and logic of any life in its true essence. It is fitting for us to try to demonstrate why this unawareness is essentially the nature of every life, beyond every personal pretense and every assertive pride.

This manifestation then acquires its own meaning as in the example of someone who, through the light of a speculative process gained with the experience of more than a hundred years, becomes aware of his own ignorance.

Until a few years ago, my life was permeated by faith in self-awareness. From the certainty of this self-awareness, I then moved to the ascertainment of unawareness. So, what does such a passage mean? And what can we expect from it?

These questions can be examined closely only if we are certain that their foundations are secure. If unawareness is, in fact, an illusion, then the problem clearly would not exist. Reexamining the experiences of my life, a life wholly dedicated to such an investigation, means transporting myself to a different level; one which would change the nature of the conclusions.

To transport myself to the level of a new and nontraditional metaphysics means to move from consciousness to unawareness and requires a decisive leap. It involves a most radical change. Therefore, I must first emphasize the state of mind of someone who tries to analyze the hypothesis of unawareness, which Spirito developed. True, we are dealing with a new metaphysics, but we need to match this new metaphysics with the old and then draw conclusions from this comparison.

I have always believed in the old metaphysics. I have always been able to devote myself to an ideal and live my life according to it. I reached my first metaphysical belief through an exposure to the principles of positivism —a faith that lasted many years and was destined to create a substantial legacy. This was the basis for my embracing neo-idealism and actual idealism. Actual idealism then evolved into fascism and corporativism. I understood corporativism in the communist sense of the word, and this opened the door to the hopes of the postwar period.

At the end of this process, from 1937 onward, I began to develop problematicism. It was a long, tiring, and destructive journey. The hope of divorcing myself from actual idealism was renewed year after year. The history of this process is narrated in my book, *Dall'attualismo al problematicismo* [*From Actual Idealism to Problematicism*], but, little by little, it became increasingly negative until it resulted in the destruction of all faiths.

From the old metaphysics I moved on to the new metaphysics—to the metaphysics of someone who embraces problematicism as his only philosophy. I was attracted to this philosophy for many years, but it has always been overridden (if only in appearance) by my mental habit of knowing how to live up to my own philosophical commitment. This is no longer the case, and since the publication of the *Storia della mia ricerca* [*History of My Search*), which theorized the end of self-awareness, the old and new metaphysics have canceled each other out. Naturally, this transformation could not remain superficial and so a basic problem arose: what to say to my students?

I began to question the function of a university professor. As a result of this experience I could no longer go on teaching, even after decades of enthusiastic lecturing. I had always taught my students to believe in—and many times had seen the emergence of—a new faith that did not necessarily correspond to mine. Indeed, in general, their new faith was unlike mine. More than thirty of my students have gone on to become university professors and lecturers. To these, we must add the free thinkers who continue to join me on a common intellectual journey. I feel that my words have profoundly affected them and stimulated their own thoughts to come forth.

Now, I have nothing more to say nor anything else to teach. This is not to say that my activity has ended or that my words have nothing more to express; on the contrary, I continue to express my thoughts, and many young people come to me with some hope of being enlightened. I still see shining, curious eyes that are both anxious and trusting, but I also feel that the end results are not what they were. The enthusiasm that I can still generate, soon fades. It can create some illusions, but only superficially.

My failure is due to two fundamental reasons: first, a new metaphysics that has too little to say; and second, a new generation that, by not paying attention to what it hears, no longer has any reason to truly believe in anything.

This is my actual situation. The drama of the unawareness begins here. Its intensity only increases. Having nothing left to say now, after consistently having had something to say for decades, is a terrible epilogue. But in the final analysis, when faith is gone, what remains? I have not yet retired into complete silence because the past still weighs on me, although it is also true that the past is, quite literally, past. It has the faded color of that which has ended. It has the dramatic force of something that has expired without the possibility of being resurrected. It needs to be brought back to life. The problems is: how?

The drama of unawareness has not yet been adequately expressed. It is a situation without precedent, which cannot be linked to any previous historical experience. From the security I felt in self-awareness to the security I felt at the end of self-awareness, I was never able to confirm what exact state of mind led me from the passage of one to the other.

But does this truly involve a transition that can be identified? Here the problem begins again and takes on a new form. In effect, if we wish to revisit the path followed in order to reach the end of self-awareness, the logical process is only problematic and has no permanent value. The new metaphysics cannot be completely destructive. If it were so, it would simply be just another traditional metaphysics, just one more conclusion similar to all the others. Instead, the new metaphysics does not destroy but rather points to the need for more research by indicating a new direction to be followed. The new metaphysics is no longer a faith, nor even the destruction of a faith. It is instead a reality in motion, enriched by the historical content present in our awareness.

Assuredly, we have little to say to those who look to us for knowledge. We can express our version of the facts, but people expect much more and we do not have the answers. We can relate our century of experiences and remain open to the future with the same unexhausted curiosity. For this generation, the drama of unawareness has already begun: we cannot see a way to end it.

If we ask ourselves what the dimensions of this drama are, it is difficult to give a precise answer. We can only say that it deals with an extremely profound historical turning point. The problem of unawareness remains in the background of our philosophical speculation, but its consequences are already looming on the horizon with decisive force. The drama is felt worldwide, even if it has not yet reached its ultimate form. It cannot yet be perceived as something verifiable, but today we cannot figure out how to avoid this crisis that is manifesting itself in thousands of negative ways. To speak of unawareness may seem arbitrary and paradoxical, yet this expression only represents an increasingly imminent reality. The conclusiveness of the problematic form can be challenged, but this challenge does not leave room for any other affirmative position.

Three

MY FASCISM

When was fascism born? Historically speaking, the answer is vague. We can refer to the post-World War I period or some postwar episodes, but that would not resolve the issue. What is important is to ascertain just when the philosophical consciousness of fascism arose, as well as the events that defined its features. To do this, we must turn to the documentation that expresses this consciousness.

Such a document exists, and it is quite an explicit and unequivocal. It is the word of a philosopher who characterized the entire life of fascism. It is the word of a philosopher who predates fascism and whose philosophy from the turn of the century gives meaning to the ideals that were later adopted. Fascism did not appear overnight; instead, it was the fruit of a long process that must be analyzed from its formation to its evolution. We can say that fascism is rooted in the principles of the new Italian idealism, the antithesis of the old positivism. Today, far from the birth and death of fascism, we can formulate a sustainable historical judgment of reality. We must, however, have the patience to deal only with the facts, transcending any personal point of view. This judgment can be best given by those who have been involved with neo-idealism since its beginning, sharing its fundamental values. Beyond such people, there are historical facts, and those facts cannot be refuted.

Whatever the events may be, they will reveal to us the entire history of fascism. First, we need to return to the document that substantiates the fascism of Giovanni Gentile. This document existed long before the March on Rome in October 1922, its exact date being 19 October 1919—the day Gentile was nominated Minister of Public Education. Naturally, this is a philosophical document, which relates to Gentile as a professor of philosophy at the University of Rome. Gentile had been transferred to Rome at the end of 1917 and began teaching in January 1918. At the end of 1918, an atmosphere of victory prevailed in Italy and a new period in the history of the country began.

Gentile immediately embraced the feeling of this new era and incorporated it into the foundation of his teaching. he developed a precise consciousness of his new mission with regard to teaching. He had a new vision of life to present to his Roman students, providing them with an historical awareness of the past and the present.

From the beginning, Gentile wanted to create a new vehicle for action and revolution regarding this new life. His writings had already been published for many years in Benedetto Croce's journal, *La Critica*, but the scope of *La Critica* had become too restrictive for Gentile. Because Gentile felt the need to reopen a dialogue explicitly directed toward the young with whom he would proceed toward the future, he founded a new journal,

Giornale critico della filosofia italiana. In its prologue, he laid out his new goals pointing out how they differed from those of the old philosophical journals. Whereas the old journals looked back at the past, the new journal, intended "to look at the future," by stimulating the young to new studies "of a moment of both Italian and world life" in which everyone would feel that a new life was beginning. This new life had to include the abandonment of selfishness and individual utilitarianism in order to acquire the certainty of faith: "a faith in a reality different from the present material one: faith in an idea."

The whole prologue is characterized by Gentile's new historical awareness. He links himself to the Risorgimento, but with the energy necessary to reach a higher ideal. The revolutionary will was already stated clearly and explicitly, but the distinction between fascism and antifascism had not yet been born. Gentile's fascism was already defined philosophically and rooted in the common culture of his time. It was a culture in which an incredible harmony was expressed, since the greatest representatives of the spiritual life of his day declared themselves in agreement with it. A typical example of this can be seen in Gentile's first contribution to the new journal, *La nuova politica liberale,* directed by Croce, Gentile, Gioacchino Volpe, Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice, and Dionisio Anzilotti. Initially, fascism was their unifying force, and they remained in agreement until 1924, even after the murder of Giacomo Matteotti. It was then that Gentile left the government, and with Croce's approval his position was filled by Alessandro Casati. Gentile's reform, which was the continuation of Croce's Gentilian reform, voiced the hopes of everyone. Gentile was able to accomplish what Croce was unable to do, thanks to the atmosphere created by the new regime.

The outcome of Gentile's reform is not easy to explain, but as far as Gentile was concerned, it certainly brought about a nation-wide affirmation of actual idealism. The spread of actual idealism increased dramatically to the point of creating an almost monopolistic control over the culture. For at least a decade, no other philosophy could compete with as much investigative fervor, and fascism had no other alternative. From its very beginning, the failure of the reform began to be noticed, but its steady degeneration only served to indicate the inability of the government to correct it. Not even fifty years have been enough time to overcome it. Fascism, betrayed and corrupted, has not even today, been successfully eliminated from Italian schools.

The deep crisis of the schools and, most notably, Gentile's reform, came about as a result of Mussolini's signing of the Vatican Agreements of 1929. At that point, Gentile's guiding spirit was repudiated, and the idea of the secular State was replaced by the confessional State. This was certainly not Mussolini's deepest conviction, but he gave in to it almost without realizing it. With the Vatican Agreements signed, Gentile's actual idealism was decisively and indefinitely refuted. The relationship between actual idealism

and fascism changed drastically.

After Matteotti's assassination, Gentile resigned from the Ministry. With the actions of the succeeding ministers, the process of dissolution of his school reform began to accelerate. However, whether fascist or antifascist, no one had the courage to directly refute Gentile's reform or the ability and will to transform it with superior ideals, either at that time or subsequently. The history of Gentile's reform is not yet finished. Even after Gentile's death, it has not been possible to spiritually surpass the dual concept of fascism/actual idealism. The historical impact of his reform still survives in spirit.

My adherence to actual idealism and fascism on a philosophical level was evident from the beginning. In the climate preceding fascism, my nomination to the post of chief editor of the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* had great significance. In the beginning, I enthusiastically supported Gentile's school reform, though I later criticized it according to explicit criteria in *La riforma della scuola* [*School Reform*, 1956] and *Il fallimento della scuola italiana* [*The Failure of the Italian School System*, 1971]. Lombardo-Radice, who had been nominated by Gentile as the director of elementary education, entrusted me to become the editor of his new journal, *L'educazione nazionale*, and so, for a year and a half, I directed it.

The dual concept of fascism/actual idealism was unquestionable for me, since in no way could I distinguish between the development of fascism and the continuation of the reform developed since the beginning of the century. This was the reform that was most fascist in character and gave meaning to fascism as the dominant ideology. This new idea affected the life of the whole country on a long-term basis, and the consequences that were felt for years, created a new atmosphere and new directions. This new culture polarized attention for both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. A fundamental philosophical unity did not allow the destinies of fascism and actual idealism to be separated. When, at a certain point, the destiny of actual idealism seemed to diverge from fascism, it was Croce who defended the reform and allowed it to continue. These two entities were felt to be essentially tied together in a single reality. I could not challenge this because I had actively supported the reform for years. My fascism and actual idealism coincided without boundaries or limitations. The course that Gentile had indicated in 1919 in his Introduction to the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* continued uninterrupted for more than seven years. My own fascism had been absolutely transparent.

Unfortunately, my unconditional adherence to fascism did not continue beyond a certain historical period, since the reform was derailed by Mussolini as a result of the Vatican Agreements that were prepared and announced unexpectedly without Gentile's knowledge. This was a genuine betrayal, consciously carried out to meet the goals that greatly differed from the traditional aims of fascism. Mussolini wanted the agreement with the Church, but he did not realize the enormity of the consequences.

What was the nature of the betrayal? It was the betrayal of the essence of the reform. One could agree or disagree with the idea of religious education in the schools (an idea Gentile had advocated since 1907), but at that time I disagreed. At a time when a child is still unable to conceptualize a rationally achieved view of life, the child cannot help but develop some sense of religious values. At the elementary school level, it is therefore necessary that children be given a mythical notion of the highest ideals. Later, when they go to high school and are exposed to more critical thinking, they will move from myth to philosophy, and their mind will be exposed to a higher concept of life. Religious education? Yes; but only in elementary school.

With the Vatican Agreements, Mussolini upset this whole design. Article 1 states that "Italy recognizes and confirms the principle declared in Article 1 of the Statute of the Kingdom of Piedmont, 4 March 1848, according to which the Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church is the sole religion of the State." In Article 36, the role of the Catholic religion in the school structure is more precisely stated: "Italy considers the foundation and culmination of public education to be the teaching of Christian doctrine according to the guidelines received by the Catholic tradition." The agreement continues: "therefore the teaching of religion now given in the elementary public school should be further developed at the high school level, according to programs to be established by an agreement between the Vatican and the State."

This article is explicitly influenced by the will of Mussolini in direct opposition to Gentile. The clause that calls for the teaching of religion "given in the elementary public school" to have "a further development in high school" is clearly opposed to Gentile's concept of education, and essentially transforms the secular character of the reform of 1923. Mussolini must have been fully aware of this fact, and possibly insisted upon this opposition. With the Vatican Agreements, actual idealism was indisputably and indefinitely denied. The basic character of the relationship between actual idealism and fascism changed drastically. Our country changed from a secular State to a confessional State, and a new reality in the history of Italy came into existence.

After Matteotti's assassination, Gentile left the ministry; and the process of the gradual dissolution of his school reform was accelerated by succeeding ministers.

In the same year, 1924, a new path opened for Gentile that would have an unforeseeable impact on Italian culture. In that year, the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*] was born. It was Gentile who conceived this work, and he continued to direct it for the rest of his life.

The significance of the philosophical character of the *Enciclopedia* was not apparent at first sight. From the beginning, the work assumed a basically practical and functional character, but Gentile quickly realized that the task could go beyond his most revolutionary expectations and that it could

be of great value to Italian culture.

At this point, we must turn our attention to the *discovery* of the *Enciclopedia* and its program. As we look back on it today, we cannot comprehend the full impact that the encyclopedia had as a novel tool for discovery in its time. But those who have followed the work since its beginning are well aware that the problem, which presented itself at its inception was that of using the Italian culture as a means for preserving the fundamental principles of postpositivistic thinking. The world had changed; its scientific synthesis had to reflect the new dominant principles. Gentile was at the center of this renewal, and the purpose of his editorial guidance of the *Enciclopedia* was to clarify the meaning of what had taken place. This was the same program as the school reform with wider horizons.

The situation that confronted Gentile as he approached this new task, was the lack of experience that Italians had in creating encyclopedias, and the more or less widespread notion that encyclopedias provided a poorer sources of cultural information. The need arose to change the general perception of the encyclopedia and to reveal its constructive and creative nature. Gentile immediately felt it was his responsibility to make the encyclopedia a reality. What we now call *Carta Enciclopedica* [*The Encyclopedic Charter*] defines what was then to be accomplished and is summarized in the preface to the first volume of 1929.

Efforts to establish an encyclopedia began in 1920. They were inadequate, yet they were already leading to the formation of a consciousness, "which would lead to a new way of understanding culture and the work of the intellect, and to the acknowledgement of the value of extensive collective works that would discipline the mind and provide concrete and definitive form to the thoughts of a people." These efforts converged in Giovanni Treccani's encyclopedic work, which began in 1925 and led to the publication of its first volume four years later. In the four years it took to create the encyclopedia, a greater awareness of what its essential purpose would be contributed to the development of a precise structural outline for this work.

The first characteristic of an encyclopedia is found in the people's awareness of its *collective* nature. The new culture had to express a reality which did not only represent the efforts of individuals but was the manifestation of a superior faith capable of expressing new demands and unifying ideas. To produce a great encyclopedia, people had to raise themselves to a new level to attain a new ideal. From the beginning, Gentile linked himself to the fascist faith by declaring that the "new climate, which exploded with the advent of fascism, shook ideas and feelings. It also ignited an inextinguishable passion for the renewal and affirmation of Italy's power in the world, making a work like this possible. In the past, such a work could not even have been considered." Subsequently, Gentile did not give an extrinsic meaning to fascism, because he believed that the progress of fascism was coincidental with the course of actual idealism,

which he had elaborated in his recent teaching in Rome. Consequently, "the first sign of this great crisis of cultural renewal was the radical reform of the schools carried out in 1923."

Because of the foregoing, the first requirement for a new, great encyclopedia was to redefine life, which was now linked to the affirmation of a new metaphysics capable of becoming a collectively shared conception. It is precisely this collective unity that makes a multiplicity of contributions to achieve the systematic order of the book. An encyclopedia is a book in which science and art are merged in a single spirit capable of representing the superior life of a new, inspiring culture. "Could the encyclopedia be an eclectic book?", Gentile asks himself, and the answer seems to be yes? The true answer, however, stems from the attributes of that unity. Freedom for everybody, but with it a singleness of spirit and of approach. The approach is the "historical method," as ascertained by that philosopher who affirmed that history and philosophy are one and the same. The *Enciclopedia Italiana* represents the new culture above all because it is both history and philosophy, as expressed in the philosophical theory that set in motion the transition of Italian thought from positivism to actual idealism. Thousands of authors were involved, Italian and foreign, belonging to the most varied disciplines, but somehow the common purpose transcended all individual intentions.

The *Enciclopedia Italiana* represented a continuation of fascism. Gentile had an explicit awareness of this, and he knew how to bind it to his reform of the school system. On a cultural level, fascism continued to go in the direction set forth by the new regime, providing the necessary means and, above all, promoting faith in the neoidealistic renewal that characterized fascism until its end. From this prevailing point of view, only one form of fascism existed—that of Gentile's—making all the others virtually obsolete. The facts regarding this matter leave no room for doubts. Indeed, when in 1932 it became necessary to define fascism in the *Enciclopedia Italiana,* Gentile had to be the one to provide a definition, subsequently attributed to Mussolini. No one else needed to apply, in spite of the confusion generated by the Vatican Agreements of 1929.

Gentile's concept of fascism had not changed, and the Vatican Agreements remained in the background as if they did not exist. In reality, they did not exist even for Mussolini, who remained bound to the ideal of the Ethical State that he had expounded since the inception of the revolution. The idealist philosophy of fascism could not change.

My vision of fascism in the life of the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, up to 1933, was clearly motivated by my job as editor of the philosophy and the social sciences section, which Gentile had entrusted to me. Later, I became the General Secretary of the project, at which point I was in daily contact with Gentile.

During the years of this increasingly intense collaboration, my actual idealism and my fascism underwent a process of transformation until they

became irreconcilable. Gentile and I remained close until his death, but our divergent positions—and our antagonism later on—progressively increased.

The first manifestation of the emerging opposition in my relationship with Gentile was remote and only indirectly dealt with fascism. As early as 1926, I first expressed an attitude of opposition to Gentile, which went back to the Introduction of the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*. In that Introduction, Gentile reaffirmed his concept of the relationship between science and philosophy, and once more claimed the religious and philosophical character of actual idealism by opposing it to the dissecting nature of science. According to Gentile:

> Science and criticism represent one realm of thought; while religion and philosophy represent another. What distinguishes the first group from the second, among other things, is faith—ordinarily ascribed to religion. Science is the analysis of a preexisting object; it is therefore an intellectual knowledge, not actually directed to the imagined object presumed to exist before the knowledge itself, but to the object as it is already known: that is, our prior knowledge appears *naïve* and instinctive *vis-à-vis* that of science. Science makes this prior knowledge the object of a destructive analysis and of a subsequent synthesis incapable of recreating that destroyed life.[2]

In 1926, I began to question such a theory. The relationship between science and philosophy now assumed an entirely different meaning for me. That is, science and philosophy constitute a single form of knowledge—simultaneously religious and philosophical. Gentile, the chief editor of the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, resisted my reasoning for years. In the end, though, he explicitly acknowledged my reasoning and, most importantly, recognized the close relationship between science and philosophy, so perfectly exemplified by the *Enciclopedia*.

As for me, I was motivated by entirely different needs awaiting a deeper fulfillment. As a result, at the end of 1927, I coauthored the journal *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica* with Arnaldo Volpicelli, which continued to be published until the end of 1935. Its main purpose was to demonstrate how law, economics, and politics could also be considered philosophies in their own right.

For me, this problem became more and more the center of an entirely new action plan, especially after Gentile was chosen to head the Solons' Commission, a commission for the reformation of the State. At that point, the entire cultural life of Italy began revolving around Gentile. School reform and the *Enciclopedia Italiana* were only the expressions of the general feeling of renewal, which by now was affecting life in every way. As an example, we need only consider the Italian Academy that brought together the most distinguished men and artists of Italy. Even today, the list of academicians is impressive for both the quantity and quality of its mem-

bers. Additionally, we should not neglect to mention the scientific activity developing at this time, particularly the Volta Conventions, which had reached an international level. In his speeches, Gentile supported the initiative in the Senate to the bitter end, defending the new Italian Academy alongside the old Academy of Lincei (which Federzoni was to abolish in 1939). But Gentile, who toward the end of his life became the president of the Italian Academy, had the time to reconstruct the Academy of Lincei and give it new life. We must not forget to credit Gentile for his hand in the upgrading of the facility and his financing of the Feltrinelli Institute so that it could function on a more international level.

The cultural renewal of Italy began to be felt on all fronts as Gentile's work branched out into a variety of fields and inspired new constructive initiatives.

The activity, gaining momentum after 1926, concerned the social sciences directed to the scientific solution of the problems of the State. The horizon was expanding, and fascism was finding new principles through which to assert its own creative force and originality. The awareness of the task that was necessary to perform in universal terms soon became dominant and found an unforseen expression in the reconstruction of the most important institutions of the State.

In this atmosphere, the task of our new journal immediately defined itself as an expression of scientific leadership. At the same time, a new fascism was born. My fascism became more precisely *mine*, including my contributions to its elaboration, and with principles, established through a more or less autonomous process. The political ideal acquired a scientific expression, transformed my fascism in an essential way.

The point of departure manifested itself with a total revision of the science of traditional economics and in particular of pure economics. My book, *La critica dell'economia liberale* [*Critique of Liberal Economics*, 1930], represented the systematic contraposition between the old and the new. Little by little, the greatest economists of that time, from Benedetto Croce to Luigi Einaudi, from Pasquale Jannaccone to Gino Arias, from Antonio Gramsci to Ugo La Malfa, from Aldo Contento to Umberto Ricci, expressed their opposition to the book.[3]

The field of economics became a noisy arena of never-ending conflict. Fascism was not prepared for a fight, continuing on that basis. The latest fascist elaboration in the field had been *La carta del lavoro* [*Labor Charter*] of 1927, which was ideologically situated between the various conflicting positions. My critique of liberalism was generally well-received, but at that point its most profound consequences were not yet revealed.

La critica dell'economia liberale was followed by *I fondamenti dell'economia corporativa* [*Foundations of Corporative Economics*, 1932]. In this work, I elaborated more precisely upon corporativism or fascism, and my personal discourse truly began. In the meantime, the School of Corporative Studies was established at the University of Pisa, under the

direction of Giuseppe Bottai. Bottai gave me the impression that he was in complete agreement with my ideas. We were moving to the left in both a socialist and a communist sense. We began with the publication of Soviet texts, and we added the "Archives of Corporative Studies" directed by Bottai himself to the journal *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica*. We were in accord philosophically, but subsequently problems arose in the light of the evolving Soviet experience. In 1933, we published a book on the *Economia programmatica* [*Planned Economy*] with which the new interpretation of corporativism and fascism would create a consensus in Italy for the first time. Not only was the criticism of the old economy upheld, but the State was beginning to take precedence over the individual. This was a fundamental and decisive step.

Based on such premises, the subsequent development of my theory was inexorable: the antiliberal economy was becoming communistic. The results were evident at the famous meeting at the Congress of Ferrara in May 1932. "Corporative ownership" was immortalized as the expression of our true corporativism. On that occasion, it was possible for me to express *my fascism* without any reservation.

Naturally, things did not at all proceed in a simple straightforward manner at all. First, Bottai asked for my resignation, which was rejected. Then, Mussolini intervened, supporting me with a public statement of approval. Finally, Starace and De Vecchi succeeded in effectively neutralizing me. My fascism died in 1935 and was never revived.

The fact that my fascism ended does not mean it did not continue to produce results linked to my previous fascist activity. We still need to bear in mind the following developments before drawing a final conclusion.

The most important and the most radically revolutionary result of fascism was the House of Fasci and Corporations in 1939. It came too late, but it was the testimony of a battle undertaken long before the March on Rome, and was destined to represent the first victory of antielectoralism and antiparliamentarianism in the world. The paradox of the legislature ended; the members of the new House were selected solely on the basis of their competency. This body could not yet function, given the limits of the regime, but the first step had been taken with complete ideological awareness. Then, everything was destroyed and the process reversed itself. It regressed so much that the further development of any scientific theory was impossible. The revolution had been started but was then foolishly left to wither.

More serious was the repudiation of all the scientific research made during the twenty years of fascism. Even if we leave aside the great cultural works to which I have previously alluded, the fact is that these twenty years saw the flowering of the social sciences, which were interrupted at that point for an indefinite period. The history of the *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica* is still current today. Even now, those problems still exist, require answers, and continue to be elusive. We only need look at the *Dizionario delle scienze politiche* [*Dictionary of Political Science*, 1944], to

realize that this undertaking was cut off in an absurd manner. If we want to assign a precise date to the end of fascism, we would need to look directly at this episode as the fundamental historical event. Fascism died when its innovative work died.

From 1932 to 1935, the scientific movement was represented above all by the Collegio Mussolini of the University of Pisa, for which the journal *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica* collected the most important documents. After 1935, the Collegio vitually died, and with it died true fascism. This is not a paradoxical, arbitrary statement. Historical confirmation exists. What names emerged from that Collegio? If we were to list them one by one, we would realize that they are very much alive and still considered among the most dominant political figures of our day. They are no longer fascists; all are now antifascists. Although they were eloquent at that time, today they have nothing to say. As a consequence, nothing but emptiness, disorientation, and destruction has occurred.

If we are to recall the final document of the life of fascism, we would need only to consider the Constitution. Its fundamental lack of coherence and its contradictory nature have been demonstrated on many occasions. We have already mentioned the different fascist political organisms validated by the Constitution whose reactionary spirit has often been pointed out. But all of these comments have meant nothing. The Constitution, needlessly dragging on toward an ever-increasing disintegration, remains unchanged.

With the Constitution, everything stopped in the field of social sciences, from the reforms of the schools to the criminal code, from the Vatican Agreements to the confessional State, from the absurdity of the multiparty system to the anarchy of the trade unions.

As far as scientific research is concerned, everything has come to a halt. No new real scientific interests have appeared on the horizon. With the end of fascism, a highly important moment in the history of Italy ended. The last valid expression of our culture had its epilogue during those twenty years. Since then, nothing has come about but mental disorder, self-defined as antifascism.

We represented true antifascism during the fascist period, because we searched for something that would go beyond fascism itself and would represent a superior value. Today, no one has any real concept of this antifascism, and everyone merely continues in the pursuit of a reality that makes no sense.

Chapter Four

MY COMMUNISM

At the Congress of Ferrara in 1932, I had to choose between fascism and communism. I chose fascism, which in its essence included communism. As a result, I was persecuted as a communist. My fascism was my communism. When fascism fell, however, I was left with only *my communism*, but I did not deviate from the path. In 1970, I again had my books on corporativism published *without changing so much as a comma*. I also published an extensive work, *Il comunismo* [*Communism*, 1965], a commentary on my past works on the subject.

In effect, nothing had to be changed. I wanted only to observe the past in light of recent historical events. These events seemed to be heading in the direction of communism, causing us to believe that the terms "fascism" and "communism" were in opposition. However, this was not the case.

Having fought for a communist vision of fascism, I now awaited the revolution. To this day, the revolution has not taken place. As a good historicist, Palmiro Togliatti wanted to keep the past going. He wanted the *historical compromise* with the Vatican, and he wanted to maintain the Vatican Agreements in their original form, without revision. He went along with the betrayal of Giovanni Gentile, since he believed it legitimate and productive that Italy should be a confessional State. So began the life of the Italian Communist Party, shortly after the fall of fascism.

And my communism? It could neither develop nor have any function. Actually, there was no reason for my faith in communism to end, since too many reasons existed to ensure its future. The end of World War II represented Stalin's triumph and the historical confirmation of the new communist regime. On the other hand, the horizons of the new ideology were broadening and the Chinese revolution had already begun.

I set aside Italian communism and directed my philosophical and practical investigation beyond its borders to identify communism's direction. My communism could materialize somewhere else—in a changing world. Here in Italy, communism seemed to be taking an increasingly reactionary path, completely abandoning the theories of "corporative ownership" and of the unification of the industrialists and the workers. True, many Italians were quaking before the communist peril. True, the Iron Curtain represented the division between civilization and barbarism. But it is also true that nothing indicated the impending downfall of communism. As a matter of fact, Togliatti could also share the government with the Christian Democrats. My eyes, then, were turned to the outside world, but the outside world was too far away and too unknown. I needed to see exactly what the communist countries were doing and how much they had succeeded in accomplishing. For most people, the Iron Curtain was seen as something that separated us from evil, but for me it represented a door to

that unknown world where I had placed my hopes. I needed to go to the Soviet Union and to those other satellite states that it had educated in the new ideals. I had faith in them, but to be absolutely convinced, I needed unequivocal proof.

Finally, the opportunity for the trip materialized in the best of possible ways. I would finally be able to see things that went beyond all our expectations. Many doors were opened to me by the Russian authorities even though in difficult and extremely restricted circumstances. I made extensive observations in an effort to collect as much information as possible. I tried to remain critical and not be fooled by circumstances. True, my state of mind was inclined toward optimism, but my "forma mentis" tended toward doubt and suspicion. My investigation, therefore, was among the most objective possible. My goal was to reach definite conclusions. I have already written about the results of my research. On rereading what I said, I have no real modifications to make. My conclusions were based upon indisputable facts.

My first visit took place in 1956, a moment of extreme importance in the history of the Soviet Union and in the history of communism, for it involves the passage from Stalin's U.S.S.R. to Khrushchev's U.S.S.R. In a sense, it was the end of the revolutionary atmosphere and the beginning of Western influence. Another world began to emerge, the significance of which was based on the lessening of the tensions between East and West. Bourgeois reality and communist reality began to converge. Since communism was to become the reality of the future, this transformation clearly represented a danger to the new regime. I remember how some people even regretted Stalin's premature death. Bourgeois contaminations abounded and forced the need for compromise. Khrushchev had the task of guaranteeing the continuation of the spirit of the revolution, and, in the beginning, he appeared fully capable in this. Stalin might be gone, but ideological security remained, and with it, faith in the future. This was confirmed to me as a result of a conversation I had with Khrushchev that lasted almost three hours. The revolution had won. Khrushchev was announcing victory and predicting that by 1965 the Soviet Union would greatly surpass the productive strength and living standard of the United States, and the fight between capitalism and communism would resolve itself definitively. Not a shadow of a doubt appeared in Khrushchev's words. Stalin was dead, but his legacy was assured forever.

Up to now, this had been my experience with communism, but while traveling around the Soviet republics, observing the pathological State of the people, I became convinced that the revolution had had its effect. Almost forty years had passed, yet no one doubted the future of the revolution. My observations throughout my extended stay in the various parts of the Soviet Union gave me a better insight than all the random testimony I gathered from personal encounters. The communist horizon had expanded in all directions.

In the meantime, the first approaches toward international coexistence began. Would the communist regime be capable of sustaining itself in the pursuit of its revolutionary task? Or would the contacts with the West result in a change of course?

From 1956 to 1961, another type of communism had arisen in the Far East. It was a communism far removed from that of the West and without an Iron Curtain. Since 1949, it was a communism where illiterate children had taken possession of political power and were running the new State. Here, the *pathos* had acquired quite a different consistency and validity. Anyone who visited China at that time could not have had any doubts. The revolution involved everybody. Its validity was full and manifest. The difference between the West and the East had reached its peak, so much so that the first contrasts between China and the Soviet Union emerged. The period of discipleship had ended, and the new communism was born.

My stay in China was much longer than my stay in the Soviet Union. I came to know a world that was, even from a diplomatic point of view, foreign to Italy. I viewed everything with an insatiable curiosity. The Chinese revolution was nothing more than the affirmation of a political reality with the strength of hundreds of millions of believers, all of whom were infused with a faith in the certainty of the future.

During my stay, I was introduced to the most powerful men in China, finally meeting Mao Tse Tung. Our conversation was of fundamental importance to me. The impression I received from it vastly exceeded all of my expectations. I was struck by the extent of his greatness. Mao was a person with an exceptional depth of character. By looking into his eyes, I could feel his absolute sincerity.

Sixteen years have passed since 1961. I do not know what happened during these years, especially after the Cultural Revolution. What is Chinese communism today? Mao is dead and China has realigned itself with the United States. The world has become increasingly more uniform and reality continues to change without respite.

I do not know what is currently happening in China, but my memories of 1956 and 1961 still dominate my experience of the past. I saw the light of true communism in the eyes of Khrushchev and Mao. It was a triumphant communism, a communism that had attained its goals, secure in its future. This communism was the only kind the world had ever seen, and one it will never see again. It was the vision of an absolute conquest that cannot be repeated, since it requires a billion people who believe in the birth of truth.

To have witnessed that reality was one of many of the privileges destiny reserved for me. Knowing that it will never occur again gives it an even more extraordinary meaning. Why will it never happen again? The answer can be found in the events that followed. With their faith either completely gone or in the process of exhausting itself, communist regimes are revealing their true nature. They have transformed themselves into ecclesiastical systems, police-states backed up by dogmas imposed upon the

masses. Revolution belongs to the past, and it can only be defended. Why—and until when—can we defend the revolution?

A revolution that had to defend itself is a dead revolution. So who defends it and by what means? Different varieties of communism continue to multiply year after year: harsh and intransigent ones, social-democratic ones that are full of compromises. No one can foresee, in any way, what the future will hold.

At the same time, the world is becoming increasingly unified as the diverse regimes become intertwined. Communism and neo-capitalism co-exist, each mutually backing the other up. The right and the left tend to converge, lose meaning, and wind up collaborating with each other in the most diverse ways. Everything becomes equivocal and absurd. Among the many ways of collaborating, we now have the system of parliamentary abstention, in which everybody says both "yes" and "no." Language becomes vague and inclusive. From an ideological or philosophical point of view, no one dares to speak his mind and everybody pretends to say something that makes sense.

Today, communism is offering the world quite a serious and obscure show. Everyone wonders if communism still exists and in what form. The closed fist or the open fist, confrontation or collaboration, proletariat or bourgeoisie, majority or opposition, Far Eastern communism or Western communism, violence or pacifism. Communism has become a series of statements and their negations, which no longer offer any direction. From a theoretical point of view, Marxism no longer possesses the capability of evolving and its great Western and Far Eastern ideological representatives have been silent for a long time.

Is there anything left to hope for? To what kind of communism do we look in order to renew our journey? So far, my position has been subjected to a continuous critical revision as a result of my problematicism and has not provided me with a thorough answer. Having spent my entire life searching for the ideal life based upon overcoming individualism, I could not give up communism. I could not renounce communism without significantly undermining the relevance of my search for the truth. However, how could I go on when the foundations upon which so many years of work had been built failed me? What could my communism then be?

I devoted my attention to the true problems of communism by writing two extensive works dealing with corporativism, and then with communism alone. The first journey reflected my fascist experience, the second, my postfascist experience. Now fascism was over, or was about to come to an end, as was the communism of the Far East and the communism of the West. Problematicism, the point of view from which I had viewed these two previous experiences, was not a valid basis for continuing my journey.

When I again published my essays on communism, I felt compelled to present an explicit statement of my conception of communism. What was becoming of my previous forecasts about the future of communism?

The answer came about as a result of a phase of problematicism, which would then be contradicted by reality. It was a phase that can be defined as "scientific," a phase represented above all by the book, *Dal mito alla scienza* [*From Myth to Science*, 1966]. I rediscovered metaphysics in the unification of knowledge, marked by science. I no longer needed to identify a superior abstract ideal. I needed to adjust myself to appreciate the necessary historical formation of reality. We could not expect to impose an arbitrary design upon the world; instead, we had to limit ourselves by recognizing what was taking place based on a global logic. The true communism was the one in which a community is conceived as the result of its encounter with various international forces. True communism notes the development of science and completely adapts to it in all of its manifestations. "Problematicity" did not generate a synthetic global vision, yet its goal was still to achieve the maximum possible systematization. This could only be attained through the objective study of the several sciences, particularly the human sciences, with the intent of organizing the fundamental principles of reality into a planned system.

The attempt, explained and elaborated in the last chapter of the volume *Il comunismo*, when reread in light of the new phase of problematicism, acquired a new meaning, making impossible any new definition of communism. The problem at this point has become who we ought to be versus who we are. Do we want to speak of a world that we must build, or of one that already exists? Does science or the sciences tell us what we ought to preserve or what we would like to create? In either case, we are clearly confronted with two distinct metaphysics, equally groundless and preconceived. Communism is the communism of the object recognized *a priori* and involves a scientific conception of communism independent of any consideration of values. As a consequence, the problem of communism takes on new dimensions as it restates itself in metaphysical terms. What was the meaning of *my communism* after the extensive elaboration I had devoted to it, first within fascism and then using the example of international communism? This was the new question that I had to ask myself before proceeding with my investigation.

The answer could only be found by rediscovering the origins of the metaphysics, which I had utilized in constructing my scientific system. My communism had been my metaphysics. If this same metaphysics was the metaphysics of actual idealism, then my communism had clearly been the communism of actual idealism. It had developed through the logic of idealistic thought in the same way as fascism. It had been the path not only of Marx, but also of Hegel. From Kant onward, actual idealism had developed in relation to dialectic thought, of which it had become the most advanced expression. My communism was not just a political faith; it coincided with the most advanced point of the history of idealism. When I expounded the theory of "corporative ownership" in Ferrara, I viewed this concept as a necessary end. The very point that I was trying to prove could

be discussed and even denied, but it fell within the logic of a thought process that had been ongoing for 200 years.

My communism, therefore, was a metaphysical communism, which placed itself on the same level of that idealism I had followed until 1935 or 1937. Then, for me, fascism ended, and with it, actual idealism. My metaphysical faith moved in other directions, and problematicism began to replace actual idealism. At this point, crisis became unavoidable. Yet problematicism was still capable of overcoming such a crisis, and, as a consequence, my philosophical position was enhanced from time to time by new metaphysical impulses. As a result, communism continued to attract me as much as it had when I was thinking as an actual idealist.

In the immediate postwar period, the worldwide affirmation of communism and, above all, the success of the new regimes, recreated the illusion of a new order based upon the triumph of communism. Not that a new metaphysics was capable of replacing the one that had failed to materialize, but the need to go forward was generating all types of rosy forecasts. The nostalgia for what was fading in communism was too great, and so it could not be categorically rejected. We remained communists even if the metaphysics that had originally inspired us had entered into a new negative phase. My communism had to reckon with problematicism, and the day of reckoning was approaching.

At a certain point, the matter began assuming new dimensions, leading to new questions that could no longer be ignored. Is it possible to have communism without its inherent metaphysics? With problematicism, we had renounced our belief in the Absolute Truth, but how could we now continue our investigation? Could we give communism a different meaning, or would we be forced to renounce it forever?

The history of communism is a history of great complexity. In it, we find the convergence of many metaphysics, both religious and philosophical. However, since each of these metaphysics eventually passes away, we must determine the one to which we can entrust ourselves in the future, in case any of them survive. What does communism mean today? What can communism be today? What new content could we impart to justify our steadfast defense of it and to transform it into an absolute ideal?

Following the more or less evident triumph of problematicism, we all began to realize that absolute principles no longer exist. We still need metaphysics, but we no longer know which path to follow in order to consolidate this metaphysics into a theory and practice that would not be an illusion.

What is today's communism? Sixty years after the Russian revolution, the answer should appear clear and definitive, but in reality no one knows how to comment effectively on the matter. Love, equality, justice, harmony, balance, order, respect for our fellow man, and so forth, have always been, and will always remain ideals we insist upon and that we associate with the most diverse metaphysics. Everything blends into the indefinite and dissolves into the arbitrary. However, these are all self-evident facts; yet

over time, they have become irrelevant. Above all, no clear path can be surmised to reach these metaphysics. They merely correspond to moralist notions. By now, after centuries of speculation, the diverse historical metaphysics have become muddled and can no longer be organized into a system.

Metaphysically speaking, communism no longer has a valid point of departure, and as a consequence, it becomes lost in contradictions. We no longer know how to begin, because to begin we should at least be certain of something. For example, we need to be certain of the existence or nonexistence of the world beyond. In the construction of the new civilization, we should be in agreement with one or the other. Are we? Could we be? Must communism be secular or confessional?

To come to an agreement about the possibility or the impossibility of taking the first important steps, we must ask the first questions. They involve the difference between everything and nothing, because if a world beyond exists, the information we may have about it will lead to hope or desperation. If such a world did not exist though, the problem of salvation would cease to have any meaning. Even if we were to establish communist regimes, what can a communist revolution mean?

Little by little, the problem grows and demands a definitive answer. Therefore, communism cannot help but be a metaphysics involving the happiness of both believers and nonbelievers. Who must decide and in the name of what freedom? We are four billion people, but four billion divided people. Can a police state or any church unite us? Through direct observation, the problem of communism should reach its final formulation. What will my communism then be?

The considerations that we have been developing cannot be conclusive and do not lend themselves to persuasive arguments. They are unreliable and useless. The metaphysical differences are insurmountable, and freedom cannot be attained. The goal of persuasion would be conceivable only in relation to a metaphysics of the rational. What are the chances that such a metaphysics can triumph?

Thus ends the history of my communism and the end of communism coincides with the end of metaphysics within problematicism. This involves a process that develops with growing intensity, but the problem we face is that of the future of communism. Our century is creating more destructive processes. This destruction could conceivably be so encompassing as to result in the unification of the world through a philosophy of negation. The hypothetical basis for this philosophy can only be negative. The hypothesis that leads to destruction, even if it succeeds in reaching unity, is meaningless. What meaning can a world without sense have? On the other hand, even if this negation were to somehow become positive, it does not possess the energy to develop further. The journey of problematicism leads nowhere.

The only possibility for a way out at this point would be a miracle

involving a reality that would neither want nor would be able to die. But this is precisely the way out of a life lived on an unconscious level, unable to give meaning to itself. My communism, no longer able to grow more metaphysical, dissolves into nothingness.

Five

THE FASCIST PERSECUTION

In 1935, the Academy of Lincei sponsored a competition with a prize for corporative studies. The deadline for submission was 31 August 1935. The examiners were Mariano D'Amelio [President], Alberto De Stefani, Roberto Michels, Federico M. Pacces [representative of the Institute of Corporative Studies at the University of Pisa], and V. Zincone [representative of the National Fascist Party].

I competed together with twenty-six other participants. The report on the competition stated that of the twenty-six competitors, "five were not considered by the Judging Commission since either the topics chosen by these competitors were not relevant to the subject or for other reasons." The other twenty-one participants were individually evaluated in the report by the Commission, which "had unanimously decided to divide the prize into two equal parts, assigning half to Professor Filippo Carli and half to Giuseppe Palladino." The report ended with the statement: "the works of candidates Widar Cesarini-Sforza, Leonida Martini, Ugo Spirito, Arnaldo Volpicelli, Guido Zanobini had not been examined by the Commission, for reasons included in the report."

On 25 February 1936, soon after I read the report, I wrote to the President of the Academy of Lincei, Professor Vittorio Rossi, requesting the reasons for which I had been excluded from the competition. I wrote:

> Today, I received from the University of Pisa the report on the competition with a prize for corporative studies, the deadline for which was 31 August. I would appreciate it if your excellency could communicate to me why my publication has not been considered by the Commission.

The President did not answer my inquiry, and in a letter dated 12 March 1936, I renewed my petition:

> On 25 February 1936, soon after I received the report of the competition for corporative studies, I wrote asking you to let me know the Commission's reasons for excluding me. Not having as yet received an answer, please allow me to renew my request.

In the meantime, my colleague Pacces, who had kept me informed about the work of the Commission, wrote to me on 10 March:

> Dear Spirito, I would like to see you with regard to the request that you have sent to the President of the Academy of Lincei. Officially, it seems that the Academy itself cannot respond because the Commission has been dissolved and cannot be reconvened; however, I know other members of the Commission share my desire to satisfy your request, so

I suggest that you write directly to the Commission or to me, specifying to what end you intend to use the statement which you are asking for.

Of course, I did not answer the letter.

On 18 March 1936, however, I changed my mind and renewed my request for an answer from the Academy:

After the assurance given me by you [Pacces] on behalf of the Commission, in response to my letter of the twelfth of the current month, I received no further communication. I am forced, therefore, to trouble you one more time and courteously solicit your reply.

In response to this request, Rossi wrote me a letter, dated 28 March:

Dear Professor, I received your letter of 25 February 1936, as well as the registered letter that you sent me on 12 March 1936. With regard to your request, I have forwarded your letter to the Judging Commission for Corporative Studies. As yet I have not received any communication. As soon as I receive it, I will let you know immediately.

This letter was followed by a handwritten letter on 30 March 1936:

Dear Professor, after my letter of the twelfth of this month, I immediately requested an answer to your petition. The delay was due to the absence of the President of the Commission, who assures me that he will be in Rome the day after tomorrow. I will try to see him in order to find and communicate an answer to you.

Cordially yours, V. Rossi.

After this cordial letter from Rossi, who had been my professor in the Department of Literature and Philosophy, I waited for the final answer that I had been requesting since 25 February 1936. On 4 April, I received this incredible letter:

Dear Professor, I wrote in my preceding letter that I wanted to respond to your petition after the Judging Commission of the competition had supplied the requested clarification. The Commission was unable to convene due to the successive absences of its members. Since you demand immediate response, I can say that from the information I have received, it is my impression that the Commission in its report used a generically worded language with deference to you as a scholar. It is possible that the Commission felt that the majority of your publications did not meet the goals of the competition. Further, they may have felt that to judge these same publications would have had political implications exceeding the goals for which the Commission had been established.

Cordially yours, V. Rossi, President.

I responded to this letter on 6 April:

> I received your letter on the fourth of this month. I was under the impression that the Judging Commission of the competition did not have the power to deliberate, but only to refer and to make recommendations to the Academy. I believed, therefore, that the Academy, and in particular its president, was aware of the reasons for my exclusion before approving the report of the Commission. However, the exclusion of a university professor from the competition is so serious a measure that I must insist on knowing the precise reason and cannot let myself be satisfied with what probably appeared appropriate to the Commission. As for the deference that the Commission showed me as a scholar, it seems to me that the only way to show such deference would be to respond fully to my request and to take responsibility for the measures adopted. I hope that you will acknowledge the legitimacy of my request; and I ask, therefore, that I be sent a formal and precise answer.
>
> Cordially yours.

Unfortunately, the formal and precise answer never came. On 14 April, the affair ended with the following letter:

> Dear Professor, I received your letter of 6 April in reference to which I can now explicitly confirm to you as president of the Academy what I wrote to you in my previous letter.
>
> Cordially yours, Vittorio Rossi.

I felt the need to present the whole picture of the events surrounding the competition sponsored by the Academy of Lincei. In addition, I find it necessary to include all the other information that I learned directly from the members of the Commission. How and why had all of this come about?

V. Zingone was a member of the Judging Commission as a representative of the National Fascist Party. On the first day, he was the one who conveyed the results of the competition to the then secretary of the party, Achille Starace. The secretary intervened immediately and suggested that a portion, but not all of the prize could be assigned to me. The dilemma, it seems, was based on the belief that Italian corporativism could not be interpreted as just a left-wing, Bolshevik theory. Another kind of corporativism expressing a right-wing view had to be given space along side mine. Starace therefore proposed dividing the prize into two parts and giving one to Giuseppe Palladino, as a representative of trade unionism. This decision would not diminish the validity of my scientific activity; at the same time, I would be offering a more objective interpretation of the Italian situation.

The Commission accepted the proposal without any hesitation. It was

reported to me as a *fait accompli.* The following day, however, the news reached Cesare De Vecchi, the Minister of Public Education. Among other things, De Vecchi was informed of the Congress of Corporative Studies [international in character], which was held in Rome at the Villa Aldobrandini. In that Congress, the communistic thesis had received special attention, above all by *Le Figaro,* which even published my photograph in its column. The news outraged De Vecchi, and his reaction was immediate and decisive. For him, Spirito had to be replaced by another economist, Filippo Carli. What if the Commission had refused? De Vecchi actually threatened to dissolve the Academy. This would have caused a scandal that could not have been permitted under any circumstance. Once again the Commission had to resign itself and accept outside interference.

Why did the Commission react this way? After all, we are talking about the Academy of Lincei and De Vecchi who could not win. De Vecchi, however, persisted in his posture and finally won, bringing about the serious consequences that came as a result. Corporativism, on the other hand, took on a different character, which it maintained until the end. Yet the Academy had quite important people among its members who were beyond any possibility of being coerced. Mariano D'Amelio, for example, was the first President of the Supreme Court and President of the Commission. Who could have opposed him? Other members included Vittorio Rossi—who was President of the Academy of Lincei and above any suspicion of a political nature; Alberto De Stefani, once the Minister of Economy and at the time a professor at the University of Rome; and Roberto Michels, the internationally renowned sociologist, whom I cannot neglect to include in the list. Why, then, didn't all these people fight back? My longtime experience with fascism came to an end, accompanied by one more condemnation of me by the world of culture. It seems to me that an incalculable fear dominated the atmosphere, crushing even those who had nothing to fear. "How do you dare to continue to discuss the matter?", I was asked, "Aren't you afraid of being crushed?" I should surely have feared the consequences because no one supported me; not the President of the Supreme Court, not Giuseppe Bottai, not even Mussolini. No one could guarantee my safety in a world where everyone was giving up. But, if the members of the Academy had not initially given up, who would have challenged this unified world of culture? Among other things, even Mussolini apparently would have supported the prestige of the cultural elite.

Naturally, with a person as close-minded as De Vecchi, I could not help but be overwhelmed. He gathered information against me and acted on it. Whereas, I was previously assured that I would be able to keep my university position as Professor of Corporative Economics, De Vecchi reviewed my career, discovered that my original teaching appointment had been in philosophy and I was teaching in a different discipline (and even in a different department) than that to which I had been assigned. He immediately ordered me to return to my original teaching position and asked

how it was that I had been permitted to hold a teaching position for which I was not qualified. According to De Vecchi, my lack of qualifications produced a distorted corporativism and resulted in communist propaganda. It was necessary, therefore, for me to return to my original teaching position and, above all, to be put in the impossible position of defending my antifascist political ideas. Having been informed of this by telegram, I was suddenly sent back to the teaching position to which I had originally been assigned at the Department of Education at the University of Messina. In Messina I would have to endure fascist political control and special surveillance. No one tried to stop this action. In spite of all the promises and assurances given to me over the years, I could do nothing but resume my post in Messina. As a result, from the failed competition on corporative studies, I was transferred to the world of philosophy. All my research both from the scientific and political points of view came to a halt. After eight years of activity, the journal *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica* ceased publication.

Problematicism was on the verge of emerging in my philosophical thought. *La vita come ricerca* [*Life as a Search*] would be published in 1937, a year later. This philosophy coincided with my renunciation of fascism and actual idealism, a renunciation that transformed my entire life. These events were the reason for the end of two beliefs that had permeated my research for twenty years. They constituted a metaphysical revolution, destined to dissolve the past in preparation for a future that did not include a new ideal. A new world was emerging for me, one that year after year would lead to a total revision of all that I had constructed. The transfer from Pisa to Messina was a passage that foreshadowed a radical hiatus in my life. If we were to summarize the meaning of this important step, I could only postulate that it had to do with the opposition between actual idealism and problematicism; that is, an opposition marked at the point of departure by the certainty of self-awareness [actual idealism], and at the point of arrival by the certainty of unawareness [problematicism].

It was in Messina that I began a final revolutionary journey that involved new demands, both on the theoretical and political levels, and that rendered the reality in which we had lived until then unrecognizable. This transformation itself was dictated by events and by destiny, suddenly catapulting me beyond the Strait of Messina. They were unanticipated events, yet they opened up a whole new vision of life for me. Life was changing in a total way, involving diverse values and fundamental opposing principles. There was no longer anything to connect what had passed with what was to follow.

This turnabout took place when I was forty years old, exactly half of my current age. It was a change that involved a way of thinking and acting that could not be compared with the past. My life was divided into two parts—one being the offspring of the other, yet possessing a force capable of changing the horizon of my beliefs. Anyone who has not experienced

such a situation cannot understand what it represents in reality. The passage from faith to a lack of faith—that is, the passage from actual idealism to problematicism, and from fascism to antifascism—cannot be considered a positive versus a negative, but rather a negative versus a positive, a progression toward a vacuum that can never be filled. This passage is not the history of a process in evolution; instead, it is the process of the arrest of every positive process. We felt as if the negative had become dominant and unstoppable. Certainly, the road to criticism is as attractive as the criticism itself, but those who remember the enthusiasm generated by faith in actual idealism have, unfortunately, come to notice that no substitute for this faith exists. To negate that which one had previously affirmed is not enough. This type of crisis immediately brings about the devastation of consciousness, dragging it into a state of uncertainty. Naturally, this transition is not as clear as one may remember it. On the contrary, this transition was accompanied by an uncertain meaning that fed its progression with a series of continually renewed illusions. The thrust behind this controversy could not help but have a positive quality, causing it to continue with a certain vigor and satisfaction. Unfortunately, the negative posture generated a state of mind full of doubts and perplexity, winning out at the end.

My philosophical investigation was becoming more difficult both on the practical and political levels. Actual idealism and fascism, besides being the expressions of a profoundly rooted faith both in the mind and the heart, were also forms of a social life nurtured by a multiplicity of convictions and feelings articulated in the most diverse ways. It was a world carefully constructed over a time suddenly crashing and eliminating any possibility of future development. We had to move forward without having any sense of how to do so. This was an alarming leap. A person can start life anew, but to start over again, after so many years of secure faith, reconstructing *ex novo* all the elements previously discovered and demonstrated, results in an almost desperate situation.

At the same time, I had an enthusiasm for the new that would ultimately generate a different kind of illusion. However, between the long, completed journey and the new critical demand, an enormously diverse capability for faith and fight came into being. My energy weakened to the point of exhaustion.

At that point, I had to take into consideration my isolation in a society still tied to actual idealism and fascism. My doubt increased progressively, as did my questions about the values represented by this movement, but the dominant atmosphere remained the same and was reinforced by other historical events. My position, as one who had been an actual idealist and a fascist, became increasingly ambiguous and had no way to assert itself in a different direction. Investigative and political uncertainty rendered the discourse difficult and hazardous. An adequately sincere mode of expression no longer existed. To say "yes" until the age of forty, and then to say "no"

after the age of forty, resulted in the beginning of a new life that would require a long period of maturation before it could affirm itself.

The exceptional nature of my experience became especially serious due to the fact that I had no new faith to replace the old one, but only an untested hypothesis. How can anyone live among people when he does not know how to express himself? The impossibility of expressing myself became much more obvious when the number of people to whom I could relate was continually decreasing. The position in which I found myself during the crisis was truly difficult and tormenting. The isolation in Messina created a sense of absurdity. It was a life permeated by a mixture of irreconcilable factors. My sense of reality was disintegrating at the same time that it was demanding a more profound internal life. In isolation and comforted by the enthusiasm of my Sicilian and Calabrese students, I matured. My provocative lectures found an echo even outside the University environment and gave me a different reason to live. Unfortunately, this enthusiasm was superficial, since it did not generate new scholarly achievements. My teaching in the Department of Education at the University of Messina did not produce students who showed promise for the future. I confronted the problem, and the answer failed to produce visible results. The blame for this situation could only be placed on the Department of Education. Proof of this are the thirteen years I spent teaching in Rome after World War II as compared to the time I spent teaching in the Department of Literature and Philosophy in Messina.

The period in Messina left an indelible mark upon me. Too many elements converged in the year I spent in Sicily for me to consider it anything less than an important year. As always, my unawareness prevailed above any other state of mind. Sicily, whose every corner I explored, is a fascinating world to be analyzed from an external point of view. With Calabrese blood running through my veins, I could not help but understand the significance of a university that embodied the spirit of both the Calabrese and Sicilian regions. As usual, events generate and nurture the essential components of the history of a man. I am happy about the unexpected events I have faced in my life. While it is not easy for me to admit this openly, my Sicilian experience has been among the most fruitful for my growth and it transcends my analysis of the specific events of that year.

As soon as I reached Messina, I immediately felt that I was a persecuted political person in exile and was not an unknown. In the hotel where I was staying, a security agent in the lobby had the task of verifying the names and surnames of all those who came to visit me. This was a consequence of an order given by Cesare Maria De Vecchi, who wanted to uphold his own brand of fascism against me. This situation was certainly unpleasant, yet it was only a small example of the overall persecution to which I was now being subjected. The Minister of Public Education could not escape his duty. He asked for police cooperation and they obeyed. I was a university professor, but I was also under special surveillance. The

existence of the regime was in jeopardy and needed to be defended against any antifascist threats. The Minister of Public Education had proof of my Bolshevism, and he acted accordingly. The problem of Bolshevism assumed central importance in Italian politics, and it was necessary to act in a timely manner. The prize offered by the Academy of Lincei was no longer the issue; it was a symptom of a plot against the State, discovered and monitored precisely by the person who controlled teaching at the university. The logic was uncontestable and had to be rigorously upheld. Ugo Spirito became the mastermind of the plot, and he had to be stopped at all costs. Naturally, the order of action had been sent to the District Attorney, who in turn put Ugo Spirito under special surveillance.

The District Attorney, however, besides being a very good civil servant, was a gentleman of rare integrity. His name was Giuseppe De Majo and overall was a man with common sense who knew exactly how empty De Vecchi's order was. His experience convinced him immediately that I was no threat, and he wanted to differentiate his responsibility from that of the Minister. One day, he called and gave me this lecture:

Professor, you may have seen that a special surveillance agent accompanies you day and night in your hotel. Unfortunately, I am obliged to do this, even though I am familiar with you and your work. Therefore, I would like to inform you that I am not responsible for the provision affecting you and that I hold you in the highest esteem and regard.

In the face of so much sincerity, I could do nothing but thank him for the gesture. However, he called me back for a yet more engaging lecture: "Professor," he told me with even more profound sincerity, "you will remember what I told you some time ago. Now, I must give you even more serious information. My son has followed your work from the beginning and recently obtained his law degree. However, he has realized that law is not for him and that his calling is philosophy. Professor, I don't know what to do, so I am placing him in your hands for you to decide his future."

I immediately got in touch with Andrea [De Majo], who has followed me since then. Today, he is an excellent professor of philosophy and history at the Liceo Augusto in Rome. Back then, after having tested his strength and enthusiasm, I named him my voluntary assistant. Since I had no one else to help me, I was pleased with the choice.

While I was under special surveillance, I was the friend and teacher of the District Attorney's son. Although the situation was surely not normal, at the same time it was not at all abnormal either. In our Sicily, everything is allowed, even what is not obviously logical. What better way to conduct a surveillance than to become friends with the person you are watching? My friendship with Andrea strengthened daily and endures even today after forty years.

Back then, the relationship with Andrea did not appear clear. As I disembarked from the ferryboat every time I returned from Rome, I found the District Attorney's car ready to take me to my hotel where I was still

under surveillance. Surely nothing was bad in all this except that a touch of ludicrousness, a sense of farce, accompanied our actions....

I left Messina at the end of 1936. Bottai had returned to Italy and was named Minister of Public Education. Suddenly, he offered me the teaching position in philosophy at the University of Genoa. Before leaving Messina, Professor Vinci, President of the University of Messina, asked me to teach economics in Law School. Bottai had other ideas. I could no longer contribute to corporative studies. He knew I was no longer a fascist. The persecution had ended, but the confusion was about to reach its climax. How far would Bottai go?

As far as Mussolini was concerned, my relationship with him had taken a different turn. After the steps taken by De Vecchi, I turned to Mussolini, directly requesting a revision of what had been decided. I thought that Mussolini, confronted with the attitude of the Minister of Public Education, would have opted for a different solution. However, De Vecchi found a way to convince even the head of government to go against me. Mussolini did not hesitate to uphold what had been decided against me. The persecution ended, but it forced me to abandon fascism.

Six

THE ANTIFASCIST PERSECUTION

The antifascist persecution began in Naples, where a Ministry dedicated to antifascist activities was located at the time. This institution initiated the political purge of Italian universities, including the University of Rome. As a result of this, I was suspended from teaching by Minister Adolfo Omodeo. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of these proceedings, and I cannot refer specifically to any of the events that occurred during that time.

As far as I can remember, only Stefano Bottari who already knew of my antifascism, which had become fully developed after 1936, was against Omodeo's decision. However, we must keep in mind that the decree came from a government that was not the government of the entire country, and much less that of Rome, which had a different political order. The situation became more serious due to the process of evaluation that was followed, which remained uncontested and did not take into account the events of recent years.

In Rome, the antifascist persecution began during the second half of June 1944, at which time the Commission of the Rehabilitation of the University at the University of Rome proposed the suspension of numerous professors. Colonel Poletti chaired the Commission, and Professor Giuseppe Caronia presided over this action. The Minister of Public Education accepted the proposal and suspended me, along with others, effective 1 August 1944.

On 12 August 1944, I received this official notice from the Ministry:

> Upon recommendation of the Ministry following the Regent's decree No. 159 of 27 July 1944, involving Article 22 in the same text, you are suspended from teaching, commencing 1 August 1944. During the period of suspension, you will receive only a salary excluding any other *indemnity*.
>
> Best wishes, G. Caronia, Interim President.

In the meantime, the Commission of Political Purges of University Personnel of the Ministry of Public Education reconvened to reexamine my position. On 13 November 1944, they sent me the following letter:

> With reference to Article 19 in the Regent's decree No. 159 of 27 July 1944, we charge Ugo Spirito, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Rome, with the offense of having repeatedly defended fascist policies in terms of corporative economics, particularly through the writings contained in the volume *Dall'economia liberale al corporativismo* [*From Liberal Economics to Corporativism*] (Article 12. No. 1, second hypothesis in the cited decree).

The Commission further stated that it had "arranged the term of 10 days from the receipt of the present notification to present possible further allegations, as well as a request for a personal audience."

This is not the place to dwell on the grounds for my defense. I will return to this matter when I discuss the sentence handed down by the Court of Appeals. I remember only that the list of incriminating charges was compiled by no less than Luigi Salvatorelli who was not subjected to prosecution for the same crime.

To fully clarify all the aspects of my position, I can only reiterate what I wrote in 1970 in a volume on *Il corporativismo* [*Corporativism*] that contains all my writings of the fascist era:

> Several months ago, a Roman publisher invited me to put together an anthology of my most important writings on corporativism. I replied that I was unable to do so at the present moment. According to the terms of my agreement with the Sansoni Publishing House, I was not allowed to publish any works, old or new, with any other editors. I added, however, that I appreciated his proposal and assured him that I would do everything in my power to make it a reality as soon it was possible. Then I took in hand the three volumes on corporativism that I had published after 1930 and proceeded to select the most significant parts. At first, this task seemed simple. However, as I delved deeper into my reading, many complications emerged, forcing me to modify my initial plan. The major problem arose as a result of having to determine what criterion to follow. Should the criterion be based on the events of 1969 or on the events that unfolded during the years of corporativism? If I chose the first criterion, I would have had the advantage of eliminating numerous writings that were obviously too *naïve* and ephemeral. However, it would have completely altered the content of my thoughts of that era. If, on the other hand, I chose the second criterion, I would have had to reconstruct my thoughts in an arbitrary way, positioned halfway between the past and the present. In addition, the reader, faced with a work rewritten to this extent, would question the nature and significance of what had been left out. The problem became increasingly complicated and demanded a very clear and precise solution. In the end, I decided to abandon the anthology altogether and consolidate all three volumes into one without modifying a single comma. Readers would then be assured of having in front of them everything I had written during those years with the same text as when it was originally presented.

I am very happy with the decision I made to republish all my writings on corporativism in their original form in 1969–1970. My decision was historical in nature, destined to illustrate both my fascism and antifascism. Had the purges in our country done likewise, the historical investigation

into fascism would be more advanced today.

Meanwhile, I responded to the letter from the Commission of Political Purges, in the following manner:

> Having been subjected to a political purge under orders from the Minister of Public Education, I acknowledge your communication dated the 13th of this month in which I am accused of having expressed repeated attempts to defend fascist politics in the corporative field, particularly in writings contained in the volume *Dall'economia liberale al corporativismo* [Article 12, No. 1, second hypothesis of the decree No. 159].
>
> Article 12, which has been cited in this case, speaks of activities in defense of fascism as a result of which you "have been shown to be unworthy of serving the State." This obviously means that the term *defense* is used disparagingly in this case, not in the sense of defending an ideal. In particular, an activity of defense is considered a misdeed only if it is pursued for profit or thoughtlessly shifts the blame to an intellectual plane out of habit more than due to intellectual reasoning. I believe, therefore, that I must answer the accusation by clearly demonstrating the lack of substance in the two allegations:
>
> I. In response to the allegation of profiteering, I can testify that my entire life has been based upon the principle of eschewing all opportunities for fame and fortune. I, who worked side by side for many years with men in government such as Giovanni Gentile and Giuseppe Bottai, has neither asked for nor received any special privileges as a result. Even my appointment to a teaching position was delayed by my concern not to appear to have been helped at all by my personal relationships. In addition, my constant resistance to acts that could compromise any of my ideas or go against my conscience worked in my favor with respect to the allegation of profiteering. I will not recount here the series of invitations, solicitations, intimidations, inquiries, and denouncements of which I have been made object. These are episodes that would illustrate my behavior better than any argument. To recall them now would imply a denunciation not worthy of this occasion.
>
> II. In response to the allegation that my activities were intended as a defense of fascism, I wish to share the following observations: (A) I have always considered corporativism as an ideal to be improved upon and carried out, but as it is not yet a reality, it is not worthy of comment. (B) I have always spoken out against any form of defense, as in, for example, "Propaganda politica e scienza" ["Political Propaganda and Science"] in *I fondamenti dell'economia corporativa* [*Foundations of Corporative Economics*], and against any expression of adulation

(*e.g.*, I have never used the word "Duce" either in private or in public). I have always respected the opinions of the antifascists in both my personal relationships with them and in their desire to collaborate with me in *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica.* (D) I have always held certain reservations with regard to the general political views and specific provisions of the fascist government. I recall here the criticism directed toward the new criminal code, the Vatican Agreements, nationalism, capitalism, trade unionism, and so forth. (E) I have refused to collaborate with the new school reform, a refusal justified in a treatise of more than a hundred typewritten pages and presented to Minister Bottai.

In response to the allegation of my lack of criticism, I cite my theory of corporativism that is the object of the book indicated in my alleged offense. The Commission believed it necessary to make the accusation more specific by referring to the volume *Dall'economia liberale al corporativismo*. I do *not* know why this volume was chosen from among the others, but I imagine the choice was sparked by the date of its publication [1939]. Were this the case, please allow me to point out that the contents of that volume were written no later than 1935, and, therefore, either predate, or are contemporary with, those of the other volumes on corporativism. This is explicitly stated in the book itself where, after having indicated the dates, I conclude: "My attempt to re-elaborate the social problems from one idealistic philosophical point of view in these volumes is based upon the thesis of the identification of science and philosophy, most radically expressed in the essay 'Il corporativismo come negazione dell'economia' ["Corporativism as a Negation of Economics"]." In this essay, my attempt to relate the two elements was complete, however, it also constituted the basis for a different philosophical and practical position, expressed in *La vita come ricerca*. This new conception, developed until 1935 and generated throughout the following decade, was a new philosophical orientation the principal manifestations of which were: *La vita come ricerca, La vita come arte* [*Life as Art*], and the volume on *Machiavelli e Guicciardini* [*Machiavelli and Guicciardini*].

My reference to 1935 has a different meaning, directly linked to the book in question, in particular the two essays that exemplify corporativism, namely: "Il corporativismo come negazione dell'economia" and "Corporativismo e libertà" ["Corporativism and Freedom"]. These two articles ignited the reaction against my communist ideas, which had been fermenting since the Congress of Ferrara held in May 1932. The first essay was a lecture given at The National Fascist Institute of Culture. The scandal it caused was so great that the Institute later refused to publish it in its journal, contrary to what

should have been done according to an explicit publishing agreement. The second essay was presented as a reaction to the French-Italian Congress on Corporative Studies [May 1935], causing an alarm exacerbated by the publicity it received in France. Consequently, the Minister of Public Education and the Party acted against me. It was then that I was removed from the teaching position as Professor of Corporative Economics in Pisa, which I had held for four years, and, as a result of which, I refused an invitation to teach at the University of Genoa. The Minister canceled my tenure at the University of Pisa and forced me to accept a position at the University of Messina. The reaction, however, did not stop there. I had participated in the competition for corporative studies sponsored for the first time by the Academy of Lincei. I was contacted by the Judging Commission when first the Party and then, more forcefully, the Minister of Public Education intervened. As a consequence, my prize was rescinded, and I was excluded from the competition for "predetermined reasons." The reaction reached such heights that the journal *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica* was forced to halt publication. With that, my activity in the field of corporative studies came to an end.

I believe that the above statements serve as a defense from the accusations presented by the Commission against me and demonstrate that Article 12 of the cited decree cannot possibly apply in my case. Nevertheless, I wish to add some observations, which are justified by my particular personal situation. During the past ten years, two governments that regard themselves as diametrically opposed have taken action against me as a result of these two essays referred to above. In both cases, only my ideas are being contested. I do not wish to comment on this bitter accusation. Today, after ten years, I renew the protest, which I formulated then, and ask that my ideas be respected. The only difference between then and now is that the thoughts I defended then had the freshness of my complete faith, and the ones I defend today are the same as those of ten years ago. Rome, 18 November 1944.

Ugo Spirito.

The process of political purge concluded as I expected. On 15 December 1944, the President of the Commission, Doctor Andrea Lorusso-Caputi, sent this note: "I am forwarding the enclosed copy in accordance with the conclusion adopted by this Commission with regard to Ugo Spirito." The following is the entire text of the sentence:

The Commission of Political Purges of University Personnel comprised of Dr. Andrea Lorusso Caputi, Judge of the Supreme Court of Appeals; Dr. Giuseppe Sangiorgio, General Director of Higher Education; and

Luigi Salvatorelli, designated by the High Commissioner for sanctions against fascism; after having read the charges against Ugo Spirito, forty-eight years of age, born in Arezzo, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Rome, accused of having made repeated attempts to defend fascist policies in the corporative field, particularly with the writings contained in the volume *Dall'economia liberale al corporativismo* [*From Liberal Economics to Corporativism*, Article 12, No. 1, second hypothesis of the Regent's decree], observes as follows: Ugo Spirito, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Rome, recommended for suspension from office by the Commission for the Rehabilitation of the University, was suspended on 31 July 1944 and subjected to political purging.

Having examined Professor Spirito's writings, particularly the volumes, *Capitalismo e corporativismo* [*Capitalism and Corporativism*] (Firenze, 1933) and *Dall'economia liberale al corporativismo* (Messina, 1939), containing essays written from 1926 to 1935, the Commission is convinced that, in reality, the corporative system as it is presented by Professor Spirito is a theoretical construction rather than a concrete institution. The Commission points out that when, as in this case, the work in question is a creation of the intellect, the consensus or dissent expressed by the theories of the author can only develop on a scientific level and are therefore extraneous to the work of this Commission. Accordingly, we exclude the fact that Professor Spirito's promotional activity through his writings constitutes a concrete, partisan defense of fascism. Likewise, the references to fascism found in some parts of his work are also part of the Author's theoretical construction and are realities only insofar as they are embryonic principles at the foundation of his doctrinal conception. For these reasons, the Commission states that Professor Ugo Spirito is not guilty of the accusation of defending fascism.

Rome, 13 December 1944.

It seemed that with this decision the problem had reached a definite conclusion. The Deputy High Commissioner of Political Purges [Dr. Mauro Scoccimarro] filed a petition opposing the decision made by the Commission of Political Purges. The petition reads as follows:

With regard to Article 20 of the Regent's decree No. 159 of 27 July 1944, I wish to appeal the conclusion reached by the Commission of the First Degree of Political Purges of University Personnel, declaring Ugo Spirito not guilty of the accusation of defending fascism. With regard to the previous statements, the following observations must be made: (1) that the thesis of the Commission of the First Degree, which states that Professor Ugo Spirito presents the corporative system as a

technical construction rather than as an institution that has materialized, is, in reality invalid, not only in the context of the vast number of political writings of the accused, but even by certain sentences gathered and included by the Commission itself on page 33 of the volume of the Acts: "The corporative regime is, as is the entire fascist revolution, the fruit of an evolution of thought that ranges from the highest philosophy to the smallest practical detail and does not, therefore, represent one of the infinite regimes that science can study, but only the historical reality in its most advanced state of awareness. Corporativism is not economics, but politics, morality, religion, and the very essence of the fascist revolution." (2) the Commission of the First Degree seems to have ignored the importance of the political position that Professor Spirito notoriously held for years among the theoreticians of fascism, receiving the highest praises from Mussolini himself and the celebrated title of "economist of the regime."

It was indeed not possible in fascist Italy to defend corporativism without at the same time promoting the Fascist Corporative State, in the same way that it was not possible to defend the Institution of Maternity and Childhood, or programs of land reclamation and economic self-sufficiency without pointing out that they were the brain children of the "Duce." For the most part, the responsibility and the shame of Italian culture consist in this: that it forgot— conscientiously or not—to act as the moral guide for the Nation, and each commendation championed by fascism assumed—in the spoken or written words of a scientist—the value of a relevant act designed to support the regime; (3) the Commission of the First Degree has failed to point out that the subject taught by Professor Spirito at the University of Pisa was named "Politics and Corporative Economics" [not simply "Corporative Economics"] as the accused states (see pp. 21 and 24 of the volume, and that the "reaction" to which the professor alludes developed around this teaching: p. 21). As had occurred in various other times to Aurelio Padovani, Edmondo Rossoni, Roberto Farinacci, and others, that reaction was due to the dissension between fascists "of the right" and fascists "of the left," which lacked any redeemable quality and confirming instead the concrete political responsibilities on account of which Professor Spirito made himself unworthy of serving the State; (4) the Commission of the First Degree did not give any weight to Professor Spirito's justifications for giving the word "defense" (with regard to fascism) an erroneous definition. These justifications would have been exempt from penalty if they had been done in defense of an ideal, since the ideas he defends today are the same as those of ten years ago (see pages 18 and 22 of the Acts) and reaffirm his uninterrupted adherence to the principles of the former regime. With regard to the cited article 12 of the Regent's decree, I also point out that

(a) Professor Ugo Spirito has enthusiastically sustained Gentile's school reform, considered the most fascist among the reforms that has been carried out in the strictest fascist manner by invoking the suppression of individual freedom, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of thought, and defining them as intolerable fetishes for the security of the State. Professor Spirito, a man of culture, a theoretician, and a scientist, supported the necessity of the fascist use of force: (b) shortly after Giacomo Matteotti's murder, he dared defend fascism by proclaiming "faith in the face of skepticism." Yet, precisely because of the national indignation at the horrid murder, he broke away from G. Lombardo-Radice and publicly accused him of antifascism. Since the above discussed elements fully complete the allegations proposed in Article 12 [defense of fascism] and of Article 13 [fascist fanaticism] in the cited Regent's decree, No. 159, I propose that the Central Commission, contrary to the conclusions reached by the Commission of the First Degree, support Ugo Spirito's termination from service with loss of every right to receive a pension.

Deputy High Commissioner of Political Purges, Mauro Scoccimarro.

In response to this appeal, I sent to the Central Commission of Political Purges the following reply [dated 1 January 1945]:

I have been given a copy of the appeal filed by the Deputy High Commissioner of Political Purges, appealing the conclusion reached by the Commission of the First Degree. I can do nothing but confirm all that I have presented in the documentation sent to the above-mentioned Commission, however, I deem it necessary to rectify some facts:

(1) With regard to my relationship with Mussolini, I am just now learning for the first time of the famous designation *economist of the regime*, and I would like to know the exact origin of this information. However, this information will only serve to confirm my attitude of intellectual independence, since I derived no office, no decoration, nor even the privilege of having my career or financial position enhanced from such a designation. Here I wish to recall again that I have never used the word "Duce" either privately or publicly. It is necessary to add that Mussolini himself, after having expressed his agreement with my theory in 1933, later became hostile toward me and approved the proposed provisions against me that were established in 1935 by the Secretary of the Party, the Minister of Public Education, and the Academy of Lincei [see, for example, the answer to the Commission of the First Degree], forcing my exclusion from the field of corporative economics from 1935 onward. In the petition, they attempt to charge me with accusations similar to those made against Party leaders, but the

comparison does not hold, because of a result of the purely theoretical nature of my activity.

(2) In the appeal, it is stated that I have "invoked the suppression of individual freedom, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of thought, defining them as intolerable fetishes for the security of the State." The meaning of my words is completely turned around, because I was limited to saying that these "expressions are meaningless *until they are interpreted as the expression of natural rights*." They acquire value only "with the conscience of absolute identity of rights and obligations" and, that "liberty is an ideal to be conquered and not a right to be conserved or defended." This is confirmed by the entire article, and then by all my writings on freedom (see in particular "Corporativismo e libertà" ["Corporativism and Freedom"]); the chapter on "La vita sociale" ["Social Life"] in *La vita come ricerca*; the essay on "L'individuo e la libertà" ["The Individual and Freedom"]; the chapter on "Il corporativismo come liberalismo assoluto e socialismo assoluto" ["Corporativism as Absolute Liberalism and Absolute Socialism"] in *Capitalismo e corporativismo*.

(3) In the appeal it is stated that I have supported the need for the use of force. Even here my thoughts have been twisted. This is what I really said: "If freedom is a spiritual conquest and not a natural right, it must be evident by now that we have the freedom we deserve. In response to democratic liberalism, which openly laments the loss of freedom, we answer: 'You dragged the nation toward skepticism and anarchy; you diminished the dignity of the State with ideologies that by now are detrimental, and led the nation to the brink of having lost the ability to have a government. You provoked the reaction, and you alone were the party truly responsible for necessary use of force. Today you complain about the violence you are enduring; but you are solely responsible for your freedom or your slavery; you possess only the freedom that you deserve. Do you want a larger measure of freedom? Conquer it. To conquer this freedom, it is necessary to set aside your complaints. It is necessary to take action. It is necessary to convert to an ideal of the State, *which is even superior to that of fascism and to elevate fascism to this superior level.* Do not deny this and revert to that situation from which fascism emerged out of inexorable necessity.'"

(4) All the new documentation against me, different from the previous evidence, which dealt with the period of 1926 to 1935, shifts to the years 1923 and 1924. At that time—more than twenty years ago—I was not yet a member of the Party. The documentation deals primarily with articles published in *L'educazione nazionale,* of which I was the chief editor. But, by referring to these years, all the accusations of unworthiness imply an attack on Lombardo-Radice, who was director of the

journal and who approved my actions as if they were his.

(5) Regarding Lombardo-Radice's contention that *I have publicly accused him of antifascism*, the contention *is absolutely untrue* just as it is untrue that I broke away from him. On the contrary, after 1924, in the same journal, I published an essay on Gioberti, and in the collection that Lombardo-Radice compiled, I published an anthology of Gioberti's works on *L'educazione degli italiani* [*To Educate Italians*, 1929]. Finally, in 1937, he chose me as his colleague in the School of Education, where professors, assistants, and students alike can verify his opinion of me. The fact that my current relationship with him is taken as proof of my fanaticism is a statement that does not deserve further consideration.

With regard to these specific observations, which could be repeated for all the other statements contained in the appeal, I would like to add one statement about the thesis sustained by the Commission of the First Degree according to which I have presented "the corporative system as a theoretical construction rather than as an institutionalized reality." Instead, according to the appeal, "the vast body of my work would show the contrary" and would even show in some of the sentences gathered by the Commission itself. It is true that those sentences present corporativism as "the only historical reality in its most advanced state of awareness;" that is, as the historical reality that must transform itself from a state of awareness into a factual reality. Indeed, those statements appear as conclusions drawn from my writings, in which, I uphold, among other things, the abolition of private property, people's democracy, the end of nationalism, the renunciation of war, the condemnation of idolatry of the State, and so forth. All this is not being recalled to mitigate the significance of my adherence to fascism, but only to clarify it, inasmuch as I have always maintained that an intellectual has only one manner of adhering to a political reality: that of determining the distance to the ideal to be reached and doing everything possible to shorten that distance. This, obviously, means something other than the *defense* of fascism of which I am accused. But likewise, this has always been the criterion that has governed my work. To demonstrate this point, it would suffice to cite *La vita come ricerca*, the fundamental motif summed up in the opening statement of the book: "To think means to object." [Lombardo-Radice asked himself why such a book did not send me into confinement.] I invite the members of the Commission to read *Capitalismo e corporativismo*, my least theoretical book, dealing with specific political problems, and to ask themselves if the problems and the solutions discussed therein are not the problems and the solutions of today. In successive volumes, I detached myself from those problems and those solutions, but even

today I do not know who has gone beyond these positions. And today, I still claim the honor of having discussed and championed at the height of the fascist regime the most radical demands of socialism and communism combined with those of liberalism. I do not have any proof that such a synthesis has received better critical form since then. With regard to that book, I want to draw attention to its clear-cut independence, reflected in the fact that, even after ten years, nothing in it appears to have been dictated by contingencies nor political compromises; nothing conceded to events nor individuals.

I claim such spiritual independence as the fundamental character of my person and of my work as a professor. I invite the Commission to confront it with the action of anyone who today believes to possess—intellectually, morally, and politically—the right to assume the role of accuser and educator in declaring me unworthy of serving the State. Rome, 27 January 1945.

Ugo Spirito.

After I made these counter-defenses, the Central Commission of Political Purges reached a decision. The following decision was dated 9 May 1945:

The Deputy High Commissioner of Political Purges has filed an appeal against the decision of the Commission of the First Degree, asking it to change the sentence ordering the dismissal of Ugo Spirito from service with loss of his right to a pension. The High Commissioner maintains that the vast number of public writings by Spirito conflicts with his thesis that the corporative system is a theoretical construction rather than a concrete institution and the text gathered by the same Commission confirms such a conflict. In addition, the Commissioner maintains that Spirito's political position has been such among the theoreticians of fascism as to draw Mussolini's highest praises and the title of "economist of the regime." Lastly, the Commissioner stresses Spirito's uninterrupted adherence to the principle of the defunct regime and the fanaticism of some of his statements shortly after Matteotti's assassination. The Commissioner concludes by demanding the total application of Articles 12 and 13 of the Regent's decree No. 159 of 27 July 1944, and the added sanction of loss of his right to a pension. Spirito substantially confirms his conclusion as presented in the judgment of the First Degree, and in response to the conclusion of the High Commissioner, he denies any connection to an interpretation of the sentences taken out of context. Spirito further asserts that his thoughts must be framed according to the principle that historical truth has to evolve from facts.

Considering that:

> The appeal of the Deputy High Commissioner involves assumptions that do not correspond to the matter being evaluated. The trial against intellectuals and the assessment of their responsibilities are outside the jurisdiction and competence of the Deputy High Commissioner and the Commission of Political Purges, who have the task of proposing sanctions against concrete manifestations that are considered forbidden by the law. Not included among such activities is the expression of ideas not accom-panied by actions based on intentions that are subject to sanctions. There is no doubt that Spirito's scientific and theoretical activity has been completely directed to the vast investigative field of politics and philosophy applied to economics. Spirito incurred no profit from these actions. On the contrary, when this activity appeared dangerous to the regime, that is, when the regime realized that the economic postulate reached by Spirito contrasted with the regime's *raison d'être*, Spirito was pushed away, put away, and forgotten. Ugo Spirito's ideas may not be shared, but it is impossible to deny that he professed them with perfect honesty of intent, and that, on the contrary, his freedom of thought had actually been diminished by that regime. The work and the scientific postulates upheld by Spirito need to be examined in their complexity at this time and not as sentences taken out of context, an examination, which may cause us to lose sight of the central idea and lead us to conclusions that at times conflict with Spirito's thought itself, even if it clearly results from a logical method of exposition. As a result, our investigation concerning the terms of the defense of fascism—the only accusation made against Spirito [since the accusation of fanaticism falls outside the initial investigation due to the fact that it cannot be considered justified by the absence of objective evidence]—leads unequivocally to the conclusion that the defense cannot be proven when the accused has remained on a scientific and theoretical level. That level must be recognized as having the most complete immunity if we wish to avoid the nullification of the most jealously guarded of freedoms—that of thought. In this way, the Commission spoke its mind and at the same time believed it has fulfilled its obligations. For these merits, the Commission of the First Degree favors the rejection of the petition of the Deputy High Commissioner and the upholding of the decision of the First Degree. So decided in Rome, 9 May 1945.

The Minister of Public Education, in concluding all of these events that accompanied the process of purging, wrote the following letter on 25 August [1945] to the President of the University of Rome, G. Caronia:

> As you know, Ugo Spirito, Professor of Philosophy at the university and already suspended from service since 31 July 1944, has been subsequently subjected to a political trial by the proper Commission of

> the Ministry, upon the recommendation of the Commission of Political Purges. With the decision dated 12 December 1944, the above-mentioned Commission decided for the acquittal of the cited professor. The Deputy High Commissioner filed a petition against this ruling at the Central Commission of Political Purges in a resolution dated 9 May 1945, rejecting the same petition and confirming the original decision contested by the High Commissioner. For this reason, in accordance with the above-mentioned decision, and with provisions already in action, Professor Ugo Spirito is rehired, and effective 1 August 1944—the initial date of the suspension—he will receive any compensation he was denied in conjunction with his position.

Thus ended the difficult journey. This is not to say that attempts at persecution ceased: protests regarding the legal procedures of the competition at Messina, and others regarding my transfer to Rome, followed.

Then, when everything seemed to go back to normal, it was suddenly decided that, following a proposal of the Commission of Political Purges, some employees of the State belonging to the first five levels of hierarchy had to be retired. Among the names put forward in the Ministry of Education, mine was included. During the session of 22 January 1946, my name was of those to be retired or deleted from the list.

PART II

Encounters and Clashes

Seven

GIOVANNI GENTILE

Giovanni Gentile began teaching at the University of Rome in January 1918. Italy was still at war and its future was uncertain. At the end of the year, however, the country tasted victory and the new history of Italy began.[1]

In the midst of these events, Gentile revealed his revolutionary will for the first time. A crucial change in his thought and action occurred. The initial document, reflecting this transformation, is the Introduction to his new journal, *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana,* almost a map of the road ahead. Indeed, this journal was not created for scientific reasons, but was the result of Gentile's need to create a new life for himself and for the Italian youth.

The Introduction professes joy and hope for the future. While the older philosophical journals looked to the past, Gentile's journal, on the other hand "looked to the future," stimulating the youth to new studies "in a moment of Italian and world history in which everyone felt as if a new life was about to unfold."[2] The new life was the emergence from selfishness and individual utilitarianism to the acquisition of the certainty of "a faith in a reality different from the dominant material one: faith in the idea."[3] Contrary to appearances, the need to believe and, therefore, to philosophize was real in Italy and Europe, as in the previous century after the Napoleonic wars. A century earlier, philosophy had been resurrected by Pasquale Galluppi, Antonio Rosmini, and Vincenzo Gioberti, ending with the *Protologia giobertiana* [*Giobertian Protology*]. Today we need to regain the idealism of those philosophers and continue to develop it according to the exigencies that surfaced after the end of positivism.

The new journal was the work of a teacher who was creating a new school of thought, the Roman school of thought. The goal was to unite teacher and student beyond any generational conflict and move forward bound together by the same faith in the new idealistic philosophy. Strangely, Benedetto Croce was opposed to such a unity. He was intolerant of the attitudes of young people, which he explicitly condemned to the point of complaining to Gentile in a letter of 11 January 1920: "This is the reason why I attempted to create once and for all a dividing line between you and your parroting little followers."[4] However, it soon became clear that Croce had no energy to oppose these followers, especially when the antifascist movement brought some of Gentile's followers closer to Croce.

The Introduction to the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* is dated 19 October 1919. With it, the "second Gentile" begins, while at the peak of his investigative, didactic, and political life. Those who were caught up in his enthusiasm could not avoid catching his revolutionary fervor. We were still far from October 1922 when Gentile would become Minister, but the

stirrings of what would constitute the continuation of his political life were already being felt in the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana.* If a second Gentile was born with the full consciousness of the task to be carried out with the new generation, he was still tied to his philosophical past in many important ways. With time and experience, however, even these ties were attenuated, and variations occurred in his thought from that time until 1944.

For now, we need to emphasize an essential principle of actual idealism, restated in the Introduction to the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*. It deals with the relationship between philosophy and science, which constitutes the fundamental objective of the program of the journal. Philosophy and science do not represent a single form of knowledge, but are opposed to each other in an absolute way. This is a point to underline, because it foretells the profound process of the transformation of actual idealism developed after the birth of the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana.*

The opposition of the two forms of knowledge clarifies the aim of the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*; this is why it is affirmed in peremptory terms, as though it never occurred in Gentile's preceding works. Therefore, we find it is important to examine an entire page of the Introduction in which the antithesis is emphasized with the profound energy dictated by Gentile's absolute faith in his philosophical program:

> Science and criticism represent one realm of thought; while religion and philosophy represent another. What distinguishes the first group from the second, among other things, is faith—ordinarily ascribed to religion. Science is the analysis of a preexisting object; it is therefore an intellectual knowledge, not actually directed to the imagined object presumed to exist before the knowledge itself, but to the object as it is already known: that is, our prior knowledge appears *naïve* and instinctive *vis-à-vis* that of science. Science makes this prior knowledge the object of a destructive analysis and of a subsequent synthesis incapable of recreating that destroyed life. We call it science, whether it is natural science, psychology, logic, theory of knowledge, or criticism of all that can be criticized. Science takes the position of someone who is inactive as it looks with curiosity upon those who act. Lifeless science, if it could truly manifest its ideal, would be completely dead and, therefore, not exist. It is an arrogant form of criticism which aims at observing life by remaining outside of life. Science demonstrates all that it states and does not admit anything that has not yet been demonstrated. For science, nothing is new under the sun. What is, has always been and will always be: law, based upon unchanging constancy. Miracle, on the other hand, constitutes something new in the world. It is absurd according to science, because it does not emanate from the scientific premise, stating a thing must be both implicit and understood. In nature, science sees only facts; in thought, science sees

> only ideas. These ideas themselves are already determined or are determinable, which is the same. Besides facts and ideas, there is nothing else. By limiting itself to facts and ideas, science is either nothing or something that cannot be defined insofar as what it is, where it is, or what it does. Faith, instead, has no facts to observe, nor ideas to demonstrate. It does not concern itself with objects waiting to be recognized. It does not presuppose, it states; it does not look, it creates; it does not analyze, therefore, it lives. It is not abstract theory, but a theory that is also practiced. Therefore, it is said that religion recreates and regenerates the spirit. Indeed, religion as faith stirs the organic and vital energies of the spirit. It brushes aside the illusion that a world already exists and the only thing expected of it is to contemplate and enjoy it. Religion places itself in front as the true reality, springing from its own bosom. True philosophy does the same, with the difference that it knows its own power while religious faith does not. Philosophy knows no other reality than the one it creates, or it is not an idea emanating from man. Water, air, numbers, fire, indefinite material being, atom, idea, act, one, God-Creator, substance, thought, however an idea is defined, its reality is not a given, is not empirically observable nor rationally thinkable outside the activity, creating it in the same rational world of thought. The progress of philosophy, from ancient times to the present, consists in the ever-increasing spiritual quality of the object of its investigation and in the ever-increasing unification of the act of thinking and the act through which reality is realized: unification in one single act so that reality coincides perfectly with the ideal.[5]

Thus, Gentile founded a journal of philosophy and religion against scientific, naturalistic, abstract thought. In so doing, he maintained and even sharpened the old concept of actual idealism, gradually transformed in the years to come. The Introduction to the new journal must be considered from this dual point of view, as it responds on the one hand to the continuation of the journey already taken, and on the other hand, to the need for a radical renewal. What was new, above all, was the recognition of the need for the beginning of a new life, which gave Gentile the joyful sense of a mission to be carried out with his disciples. It was a new life, linked to the tradition of the Risorgimento, but aspiring to go beyond it, toward an Italy that had gained from victory the necessary energy for a higher actualization.

In the three years between October 1919 and October 1922, the new atmosphere already characterized Gentile's revolutionary will. Then the fascists took power. But for Gentile, fascism was simply a question of carrying on with a clear awareness of the ideals to be realized. While Gentile appeared to adhere to fascism only after the fascist takeover, the truth is that by the time of the takeover he was already beginning to develop a fascism operating at a higher speculative level.

As fascist institutions endured, Italian culture really started to express itself with an impressive harmony. Fascism adopted a unified philosophy with which the greatest representatives of our spiritual life expressed their agreement. A typical example was a new journal to which Gentile immediately contributed: *La nuova politica liberale*. In fascism, people saw the strengthening of the liberal tradition shared with open conviction by the major philosophers and historians. Benedetto Croce, Giovanni Gentile, Gioacchino Volpe, Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice, and Dionisio Anzilotti appeared as the editors of this new journal. Fascism initially united them in the same faith, and their collaboration continued until 1924, even after Giacomo Matteotti's assassination. At this time, Gentile decided to leave the government, and with Croce's approval was replaced by Alessandro Casati. Everyone greeted Gentile's reforms with hope, which was a prosecution of the Gentilian reforms pushed by Croce. Thanks to the atmosphere created by the new regime, Gentile accomplished what Croce could not.

So began Gentile's life as a fascist and as the philosopher who gave fascism the meaning and the reality of his own thought. Gentile's reform was not something that came out of fascism, but was an imprint given to fascism that came out of idealism. Gentile was only carrying out a program that he had worked from the beginning of the century. Later, everything was turned upside down within fascism itself, but in those early years, actual idealism, in the process of its evolution, lent its own content to the regime.

Gentile's reform was not easily discernible. As far as Gentile was concerned, it became a realization of actual idealism on a national scale. Its subsequent failure, which was not severe enough to necessitate a subsequent reform, did result in the further degeneration of the school system, demonstrating the nation's inability to correct Gentile's reform. Fifty years have not been enough for our national will to get beyond it.

At the moment of the formulation and translation into law, Gentile's reform produced a fundamental influence on Italian culture. The course of actual idealism picked up speed at an extraordinary pace, becoming the prevailing national philosophy. Even from this point of view, it is not easy to make a precise historical assessment, especially since, a few years later, a process of revision of neo-idealism began. But for a decade at least, no other philosophy appeared to challenge its philosophical faith, and fascism had no philosophical alternative. When the word "fascism" had to be defined in the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, it was necessary to add the name Gentile along with Mussolini. No one was able to move beyond it. Gentile had also been the chair of the so called Solons' Commission and had therefore also become deeply involved in the reform of the sociopolitical institutions.

Unfortunately, in 1929, the proclamation of the Vatican Agreements, carried out without Gentile's knowledge, constituted the betrayal of his philosophy and the repudiation of the spirit of his school reform. Consequently, a rift occurred between actual idealism and fascism, resulting

in the transformation of our country from a secular state to a confessional state. Actual idealism had been defeated.

To understand the betrayal, we must return to the fundamental thesis of Gentile's pedagogy, which since 1907, supported the introduction of religious teaching in the elementary schools. When he became Minister in 1923, Gentile carried out his reform by keeping the religious teaching in the primary grades. The purpose was clear. When a boy is still unable to elevate himself to the philosophical plane, he cannot help but have some sense of religious values. At the elementary level, therefore, it is necessary to give him a mythical notion of the supreme ideals. When he reaches the secondary level and the possibility of gaining a more critical knowledge, he will move from myth to philosophy and his mind will open to higher concepts. Religious education, then, but only at the elementary level.

Mussolini, instead, had other political aims and wanted to reach the agreement with the Vatican at all costs. Suddenly, the country was confronted with the Vatican Agreements. In the treaty, Article 1 states: "Italy recognizes and affirms the principles consecrated in Article 1 of the Statute of the Kingdom dated 4 March 1848, stating the Roman Catholic and Apostolic religion is the sole religion of the State." Then in Article 36 of the Vatican Agreements, the role of the Catholic religion is strengthened by the teaching of its doctrine in the schools: "Italy considers the foundation and crown of public instruction to be the teaching of Christian doctrine according to the form received from the Catholic tradition." [The Article] continues: "therefore it [Italy] allows religious teaching now given in the Elementary Public Schools to further continue to develop in the Secondary Schools, according to programs to be established through an agreement between the Holy See and the State."

The wording of this article clearly reveals Mussolini's disagreement with Gentile. The clause stating that the "religious teaching now given in the Elementary Public Schools should continue to develop in the Secondary Schools," is in evident opposition to Gentile's position, and had as a result the transformation of the essentially secular quality of the reform of 1923. Mussolini could not help but have full knowledge of the fact, and perhaps he insisted on the inclusion. With the Vatican Agreement, actual idealism was denied in a peremptory manner and for the foreseeable future. The relationship between actual idealism and fascism was radically changed.

After Matteotti's assassination, Gentile left the ministry and the process of dissolving the school reform began with an ever-increasing pace through the work of the Ministers who succeeded him. No one had the courage to disavow the reform, neither then nor after, neither fascists nor antifascists, but no one had the capability or the will to improve it with superior ideals.

In the same year, 1924, a new avenue opened for Gentile, destined to have an unforeseeable importance in his thought and in Italian culture. In 1924, the *Enciclopedia Italiana* project was born, which Gentile planned and directed until his death.

What philosophical meaning the *Enciclopedia* could have was not immediately evident. Since the beginning, the project took a predominantly practical character. Soon, Gentile realized that the project was open to most revolutionary possibilities and could make a highly valuable contribution to Italian culture.

At this point, we should turn our attention to the issue of in what way the encyclopedia project was a new *discovery* for Italians. Today, looking back, the discovery aspect of the *Enciclopedia* has lost some of its meaning. Those who have followed its work from the beginning know the problem that arose at its creation was how to transform the new Italian culture while respecting the physiognomy acquired through principles that characterized postpositivistic thought. The world had changed, and Gentile's scientific synthesis had to respond to the changes. Gentile was at the center of this renewed intellectual life, and his direction of the *Enciclopedia* was to bring about a consciousness of what had happened on the world scene. The program that had produced the school reform was now positioned to reach new horizons.

Why the *Enciclopedia* was viewed as a new discovery can be clarified quite explicitly. As Italians, we had no precise notion of what an encyclopedia was. While one project had been attempted in the nineteenth century, Italians had no such reference work and had to turn to British, French, and German encyclopedias. No one complained about the absence of such a work, however, because "the habit prevailed of showing the highest contempt for such forms of literary productions that do not open the field to productive ingenuity and creative geniality, and ought to be left to the dealers in commercial literature and to manual laborers in second- and third-hand science."[6]

As a result, when Gentile began to involve himself in the project, he was faced with a lack of experience with encyclopedias, as well as with the more or less accepted negative opinion of the culture regarding such works. It was necessary, therefore, to rehabilitate the idea of the encyclopedia and to convince others of the constructive and creative nature of such a project. Gentile had a strong sense of the importance of his task, and immediately outlined the fundamental points of the project. Thus was born the *Carta Enciclopedica* [*Encyclopedic Charter*], defining the goals of the work. It was later summarized in the Preface to the first volume, dated 1929.

Efforts to create an encyclopedia began in 1920. While they were inadequate, they were already directed toward the formation of an awareness "leading to a new understanding of culture and intellectual work and to a recognition of the worth of vast collective works that discipline the mind and give concrete and definitive form to the thought of a nation."[7] These efforts converged in the initiative of Giovanni Treccani. Serious work began in 1925, with the first volume appearing four years later. In four years time, the awareness of the meaning of an encyclopedia matured and the approach to the work was clarified.

The first characteristic of an encyclopedia is, above all, its nature as a collective work. The new culture was the expression of a reality that was not the product of the efforts of a few individuals, but was the expression of a superior faith capable of embracing new common needs and feelings. To make a great encyclopedia, it was necessary to rise to the level that would express the achievement of a new ideal. Since the beginning, Gentile appealed to the fascist faith, stating "the climate that made a work such as this possible, which in the past did not seem thinkable, is the new spiritual climate exploding with the advent of fascism, shaking ideas and emotions, and lighting an inextinguishable desire for renewal and for the affirmation of the power of Italy in the world."[8] However, Gentile did not assign an outside meaning to fascism, because to him the evolution of fascism was simply the evolution of his own thought—actual idealism—elaborated during his recent Roman teaching experience so the "first sign of that vigorous crisis of renewal had been the radical reform of the educational curriculum established in 1923."[9]

The first requirement, therefore, for the great encyclopedia was a new conception of life linked to a metaphysics capable of becoming the conscience of a community. It is this relationship of collective unity that makes possible for the multiplicity of collaborators to contribute to the systematic nature of the book. The encyclopedia is a book in which science and art are fused into a single entity, the spirit representing the superior life of a new culture. An eclectic book? Gentile asks himself. He seems to answer positively, but then the true answer emerges from its strong character of unity. Freedom for all collaborators, but unity of spirit and method. The method is an *historical method*, according to its definition by the philosopher who has championed the identity of philosophy and history. The *Enciclopedia Italiana* represents the new culture, especially because it is history and philosophy moving the Italian thought from positivism to actual idealism. Even though thousands of collaborators were involved, including Italians and foreigners from many disciplines, they all expressed a common awareness, no matter what their individual orientations were.

These few hints at the fundamental character of the encyclopedia are enough to allow us to understand how a new concept of culture, tied essentially to the new philosophy of idealism, was established. However, as a result of the evolution of actual idealism during the years of the creation of the *Enciclopedia*, another peculiar trait emerged in the determination of the new culture. Everything expressed in the Introduction remained valid, but another aspect became evident as a result of the new relationship that emerged between science and philosophy.

Those years saw actual idealism profoundly change its position regarding the relationship between science and philosophy. The problem had not yet been seriously dealt with and remained unclear. But now it has become clarified, historically speaking, and ought to be carefully examined.

I have already shown how actual idealism reached the peak of its

philosophical development in 1918 when Gentile began teaching in Rome. It was then the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* appeared and defined the future development of actual idealism in an essential way. As we have seen, at the center of the program was the definition of the relationship between science and philosophy, formulated by Gentile at the beginning of his philosophical investigation. Since its inception, the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* set itself in opposition to the methods of science, declared foreign to the goals of the journal. This was the definition of actual idealism in 1919. However, soon after, the problems posed by the work on the encyclopedia challenged this established assumption to the point of rupture. The history of Italian neo-idealism was completely inspired by a radical rejection of science, both in the Crocean and in the Gentilian systems. Now, however, the issue surfaced regarding what attitude to take with respect to the encyclopedia. Could the *Enciclopedia* continue to divide philosophy and science into two heterogeneous entities?

Beginning in 1926, the issue of science and philosophy represented a turning point of crisis in actual idealism. In 1927, the journal *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica* began publication, devoted to championing the thesis of the identity of science and philosophy. It signaled a revolution within actual idealism that could no longer follow the program established in 1919. What program would then form the foundation of the *Enciclopedia*? How, then, could the *Enciclopedia* be created? The reform was carried out by Gentile's followers, but at a point it influenced the thought of Gentile himself, who ended up recognizing the identity of the two terms in the *Enciclopedia*. The Introduction, dated 1929, does not focus on the problem; however, by September 1930, at a speech given at a scientific convention in Trento, Gentile explicitly stated:

> Allow me to make an initial statement of clarification. I believe that this event should be hailed as the joyous beginning of our Association. At these annual meetings, we now see the participation of philosophers, while until yesterday, philosophers and scientists felt the need to look at each other with mistrust, as if they could not approach the others' field of investigation without risking the deformation or adulteration of it. Both groups were convinced that they were speaking different languages and were thinking with different and irreconcilable mentalities. In the meanwhile, our Association, where scientists are in the great majority, has seen fit to go against the division between science and philosophy by creating a new section devoted to philosophy. The majority of scientists agree that to separate science and philosophy is an absurd because the reality that the mind is trying to capture is really one, even though this reality may have many different aspects. The work of the mind consists of justifying and systematizing all of these aspects and, therefore, of unifying this reality into a single definitive concept: philosophy.[10]

In the next issue of the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana,* a long essay by Gentile, "Filosofia e scienza" ["Philosophy and Science"], appeared, wherein he clearly redefined his position *vis-à-vis* the journal *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica.*[11]

The above-mentioned journals and essays are crucial because they are the result of the work done to organize the *Enciclopedia.* The *Enciclopedia* would not have been able to acquire its physiognomy, without the recognition of the identity of philosophy and science. In the history of actual idealism, this rejoining of the two fields of study is a revolutionary principle that completely illuminates the ulterior development of Gentile's thought. From this vantage point, the fact that Gentile included a lengthy article of mine on the topic of Agriculture in the first volume of the *Enciclopedia* is not strange because the designated author of the article was unable, at the last minute, to submit his work. The fact that I was a student of philosophy, totally incompetent on the given subject, was not deemed an insurmountable obstacle by Gentile, who allowed me to submit the article anonymously. This may be an episode of secondary importance, yet quite meaningful.

Gentile was the author-editor of the *Enciclopedia,* becoming the point of reference for all cultural activities of that era. Gentile was the promoter of an Italian cultural unity and gradually took over the direction of the most important cultural institutions of the country. He created a world that provided him with the conditions necessary to achieve this goal. At the center of this world was the university. In the *Enciclopedia,* a work of exceptional dimension, the contributions of hundreds of authors appear. But, from an editorial point of view, the *Enciclopedia* received direction from the very same school Gentile started after his transfer to Rome. At the beginning, asked his friends Carlo Nallino, Cesare De Lollis, and Roberto Almagià for their advice. They suggested to him the names of three very young scholars, Antonino Pagliaro, Bruno Migliorini, Riccardo Riccardi. For his part, Gentile chose Ugo Spirito, one of his students. This was the core of the first editorial staff, soon jokingly called the *patriarchs.* The rest of the staff was destined to become rather numerous. Giuseppe Prezzolini observed that Italians, at long last, were starting to learn about the art of collaboration and this new phenomenon was the result of the "school of professors," known as the *Enciclopedia.* A school that, besides the editorial staff, gradually included almost all Italian scholars, from Umberto Bosco to Gioacchino Volpe, from Enrico Fermi to Roberto Almagià and Gaetano De Sanctis, from Ugo La Malfa to Guido Calogero.

Through the *Enciclopedia,* Italian culture succeeded in reaching a high level of collaboration, affecting new generations for years to come. The influence exercised by the Treccani Institute was not limited to the institution itself. It was soon followed by a series of initiatives, which continued after Gentile's death. In 1932, Gentile acquired the Sansoni Publishing House, which backed the expansion of the activities of the

Treccani Institute. Among other things, the new Sansoni Publishing House published the *Dizionario Enciclopedico Sansoni* [*Sansoni Encyclopedic Dictionary*], the work of some of the major editors of the *Enciclopedia*, such as Mario Niccoli and Guido Martellotti. After Gentile's death, The Sansoni Publishing House continued to publish many specialized encyclopedias, furthering the goals of the *Enciclopedia* and creating groups of collaborating scholars in many disciplines: *Enciclopedia cattolica* [*The Catholic Encyclopedia*], *Enciclopedia filosofica* [*Philosophical Encyclopedia*], *Enciclopedia Medica* [*Medical Encyclopedia*], *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo* [*Encyclopedia of Entertainment*], *Storia antologica dei problemi* [*Anthology of the History of Problems*], *Enciclopedia universale dell'arte* [*Encyclopedia of the Arts*], *Il nuovo Galileo* [*The New Galileo*], *Dizionario enciclopedico di architettura e di urbanistica* [*Encyclopedic Dictionary of Architecture and of Urban Planning*], and *Enciclopedia della chimica* [*Encyclopedia of Chemistry*]. In addition to the publication of these encyclopedias, the Institute of Lexography was also established, which published *Il dizionario tedesco-italiano* [*The German-Italian Dictionary*] and *Il dizionario inglese-italiano* [*The English-Italian Dictionary*].

The encyclopedic initiatives Gentile began in 1925 continued in the development of such works through the following decades. Today, the Giovanni Gentile Foundation for philosophical studies constitutes the nucleus of scholarly activities, beginning with that first step. It has edited the complete edition of Gentile's works and has already published fourteen volumes of a series of essays called *Giovanni Gentile, la vita e le opere* [*Life and Works of Giovanni Gentile*]. It has been carrying on the publication of the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* and has started collecting the correspondence between Gentile and his teachers and students.

As far as the transformation of Gentile's thought during his residence in Rome from 1914 to 1944 is concerned, we must recall the influence exerted upon him by his political and encyclopedic experiences. First, we must understand his growing interest in social problems and in the theories of corporativism. The critique of liberalism escalated and acquired socialist overtones to the point that communism was regarded as only a "restless" form of corporativism. In 1937, Gentile felt the need to reprint his early writings on Karl Marx, which he rediscovered nearly forty years after their first publication. In the posthumous volume, *Genesi e struttura della società* [*Genesis and Structure of Society*], the design of a new political doctrine explicitly appears and marks the point of arrival of Gentile's political investigation. Fascism lived through him in a revolutionary rather than a reactionary sense. Encyclopedic editorship and fascism converged.

Meanwhile, actual idealism was being profoundly transformed on a higher investigative level. Its last philosophical work had been the *Filosofia dell'arte* [*Philosophy of Art*, 1932]. After that date, a movement critical of actual idealism had begun in Italy, part of a never-ending revisionary

process. The peak of the rise of idealism had been reached and, at the same time, the first symptoms of conflicting demands were emerging. They were only vague demands that did not have the energy to organize themselves in an organic manner capable of reaching systematic conclusions; however, they were already the prelude to a process of dissolution. Actual idealism entered a new phase, anticipating the reaction it was destined to receive in the postwar era. This reaction was worsened by the sectarian political situation, already showing signs of a new orientation dominated by dogmatism and sterility, and one negatively influencing the pursuit of our best tradition of philosophical research.

The most relevant episode in this period of the history of actual idealism was the publication of *La vita come ricerca* [*Life as a Search*]. In the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, Gentile published a review of my book written by Delio Cantimori, with an editorial note of his own, saying he: "would publish in serial form the book of his dear friend Ugo Spirito. Although he considered it a fundamentally flawed work, he believed it was a revealing and meaningful document of the state of mind widespread among the most intelligent young—and not so young—Italian students of philosophy."[12] In the same journal, I responded to Gentile's remarks, asking him to further clarify his thoughts, as well as his accusation that the book was "fundamentally flawed." Gentile quickly responded by assuring me in "the following issue, after having read your book with the greatest of care, I will respond to your request and clarify my thoughts."[13] In the following issue, Gentile published a long answer beginning with an explicit statement: "I have read it again and again, and I am still of the same opinion, although I am sorry to have to tell you this."[14]

I did not reply to Gentile, and only now, in an article "Il cammino del Problematicismo" ["The Journey of Problematicism"], have I tried to explain my reason for not answering him.[15]

With Gentile I had followed fascism until my departure in 1935 and after my *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica* ceased publication. My book, *La vita come ricerca*, however, was substantially a critique aimed at the whole of actual idealism, including all of its historical presuppositions and philosophical conclusions. It dealt with all of the problems on which I based my fascism and idealism. Everything I wrote resulted in arguments (at times raw and violent) between Gentile and me. Up until this point, Gentile had treated me too kindly. Now, however, after having played the disciple for so many years, following my master assiduously and collaboratively, on a daily basis for twenty years, I had been too sure of my own beliefs.

A new problem emerged at this point also commanding attention. Did my critique of actual idealism remain completely outside Gentile's further evolution or did it motivate him? If we leave aside my position on corporativism, did my accusation against his understanding of humanism remain completely unheard?

After having completed the critique of the contemplative character of actual idealism, I added a page on the concept of humanism involving Gentile's entire school reform:

> This is made evident in all the ethical consequences of idealism, especially in the educational goals of its pedagogy. The school that may derive from it is the humanistic one, in which, beyond any possible specifications a person is being formed—spirit and all—a total human being. It is an historical and literary humanism, solidified and made into an unchangeable model through centuries. It is not the man of the twentieth century with the enormous multiplication of needs and an ever-accelerating pace of life; it is not the man who may result from the reconstruction of the past influenced by examples and work of the classics; it is not a school forged with the instrument of today's life, but rather the old humanistic school freed from its slag and refined in its expression—where Latin and Greek, Cicero and Homer, reign unchallenged; where history and philosophy give an awareness of what the world has been. An education based only on books, or rather on the classical authors and completely contained within the walls of the classroom without any immediate contact with life, monotonously reproduces the unrivaled models of the past centuries. All of this because one thinks that to create one must, first of all, acquire self-awareness—an awareness of history, which proceeds solely on its own. To think and to create with infinite liberty, it is necessary to abstain from arbitrariness and to move according to the internal law of thought and creation. To face the future, it is necessary to keep one's feet solidly planted in the past. The function of the school is to provide the knowledge of the past, for only after this has been done can the doors of the future open and tell us: "Go and create!" But to create what? Does not philosophy tell us that *res gestae* [things that happened] and *historia rerum gestarum* [history of things that happened] are the same thing? So once we are out of school we cannot help but realize that the past was the present; that acquiring knowledge was creating; that the books were everything; that studying was the only true action; and that classical man was the only man. We realize school produces only one type of man: the scholar, the professor, the historian, who deals only with the past and is unable to see the reality surrounding him. We realize at last with great pain, what a terrible and inhuman thing is carried out in the name of humanism, alienating thousands upon thousands of young people from reality, forcing them to live for years among Greek and Latin works, which scrape their souls, wearing them out, dulling them, without ever entering them, and precluding them from a life they would be perfectly able of living. From the ideal of the complete man, conceived of as an indissoluble unity of theory and practice, we again fall into theory, artifice, and life.[16]

My book, *La vita come ricerca*, was published in 1937. Gentile wrote the book, *Genesi e struttura della società*, with a Foreword dated 25 September 1943, in which he states that the book summarizes a group of lectures given in 1942–1943. The book deals with the "recent Italian movement," responding to a need "that has been felt in the most enlightened current of conservative liberalism for the last fifty years."[17] It is the movement of corporativism, wherein the concept of humanism is transformed and becomes the humanism for the new times. Gentile illustrates it this way:

> The humanistic culture, a glorious step in the liberation of man, is succeeded today or will be succeeded tomorrow by the humanism of labor. For the creation of the great industry has profoundly modified the modern concept of culture; which was mainly the culture of the artistic and literary intelligence, one which left out of the account the vast segment of humanity that does not raise their eyes toward the free horizons of the higher culture, but labor at the foundations of human culture, where man is in contact with nature. There man labors as *man*, aware of what he is doing with the consciousness of himself and of the world in which he is incorporated. His work reveals the same activity of thought that sets and solves the problem in which his actual existence is continually knotted and untied in the world of art, literature, scholarship, and philosophy. The farmer labors, the artisan labors, and so does the master craftsman. Equally labor the artist, the scholar, and philosopher. Gradually the material through which man puts himself to the test in his labors grow lighter and is dematerialized; so the spirit is realized to fly freely in its own air, outside of space and time. But matter is already conquered when the hoe bites into the earth, breaking up the ground and making it play its part in the pursuit of human ends. From the very beginning of his labors, man is human; he has risen into the kingdom of the spirit, where the world is the creation of his thought, or in short his own self. Every laborer is *faber fortunae suae* [master of his own fortune,] or rather *faber sui ipsius* [master of his own destiny.]
>
> It was necessary, therefore, that the conception of human culture appropriate to the literary and philosophical humanism should be extended to embrace every form of activity in which man labors to create his humanity. It was necessary that the high dignity, which man by thinking had discovered in thought itself, should be accorded to the "worker" also. It was necessary that thinkers, scientists, and artists join hands with the workers in this consciousness of the universal dignity of humanity. There is no doubt that the social changes and the parallel socialist movement of the nineteenth century have created this new humanism, the actual organization of which in concrete political terms

> is the task and the concern of our century. The State can no longer be thought of as the State of the citizen (or of the man and the citizen) as in the days of the French Revolution. It is and it should be the State of the workers, whose interests are differentiated according to natural categories gradually becoming established. The citizen is neither the abstract man, nor the man of the "ruling class" (more educated and richer), nor even the man, who knowing how to read and write has in his hands an instrument for unlimited spiritual communication with all other men. The real man, the man who counts, is the man who works, and whose worth is measured by his work. For it is indeed true that labor is valuable, and a man's worth is to be measured by the quality of his work.[18]

Gentile continues:

> This is the concept of the modern State (in Italy it is called "corporative"), which seeks to achieve the dimension of a State based on freedom by adherence to the effective characteristics of the people to whom the liberty is to belong. If this liberty is attributed to a nonexistent abstraction and not to the people as it effectively exists, it never comes to fruition and there is some risk of its becoming a fraud. A fraud is French liberalism, or even worse, English liberal tradition, which arose at the end of the seventeenth century to justify the government of the landowning classes at the expense of the working class. The State that is free—the State of the working man—ought to take into account the moral and economic essence of labor as it is necessarily differentiated in the system of national economy. Otherwise, the State will be turning its back on the living individual in pursuit of a man of straw.[19]

This is Gentile's humanism and corporativism, which he had already touched upon in his commentary on my theory of corporative ownership property in 1932.[20] With the volume, *Genesi e struttura della società*, published posthumously in 1946, Gentile's philosophical activity came to an end. This book synthesizes Gentile's activity in Rome as he was progressively formulating the ideas and principles he expounded upon from 1918 until 1944. He was, and at the same time was not, the same Gentile who trained at Pisa during the last years of the nineteenth century. He was insofar as he remained an actual idealist until his death, even when Italy entered into a terrible crisis. At the beginning of the Foreword to the book he wrote: "I wrote this book to relieve my soul during days full of anguish for every Italian and in order to fulfill a civic duty, since I saw no other duty as I thought about the Italy of the future for which I worked all my life."[21] Gentile remained an actual idealist until death and maintained a faith that never wavered. But, if he always maintained a never-ending faith, the Gentile of the Roman period was certainly a new Gentile, one who assumed

a different life, precisely revealed in his concluding volume.

Gentile's originality should be clear enough from what has been examined thus far from the fundamental documents I have cited. He continued to formulate his philosophy in the lessons and the books that later ensued, such as *Filosofia dell'arte* or *Genesi e struttura della società* or the first volume of his *Storia della filosofia fino a Platone* [*History of Philosophy Up to Plato*]. He continued his normal activities, and his sphere of interests encompassed the many diverse aspects of Italian life.

This widening of Gentile's interests since his transfer to the University of Rome can be qualified by a term discussed in the book *Genesi e struttura della società*. This term is "culture"; it is used as a comprehensive term to include all knowledge. In Rome, Gentile was always the philosopher of actual idealism, but the center of his life became a culture that was realizing itself in many different directions. He became a politician and the legislator of the new school; a fascist who worked in many state-owned institutions, including The Fascist Institute of Culture, and on numerous magazines; the reformer of scholastic institutions, such as the Scuola Normale of Pisa; the president of the Italian Academy; the founder or director of many cultural institutions; the editor and owner of publishing houses; and the creator of the *Enciclopedia Italiana*. Since for Gentile, philosophy was the source of everything, his actions extended to the whole world of culture. From this vantage point, it is not possible to compare Gentile to any other personality in Italian cultural life. He was the symbol of the cultural activity of an entire country. His historical importance lasted a quarter of a century and was extraordinary. He guided the most important manifestations of our spiritual education.

In the twenty-five years of my close collaboration with Gentile, my ties with him were continually strengthened, whether I agreed or disagreed with him. Therefore, it is not strange that my name came up more than once as I remembered Gentile's Roman period in a lecture that I gave at the Institute of the Enciclopedia Italiana where I lived for years, in a room adjacent to the one where Gentile worked. Therefore, it is easy to understand the emotion that I felt after more than thirty years when I did not have the strength to set foot in the Institute.

Since 1918, Gentile was the mentor who formed my personality. I was discovered by him. This is an evident truth that cannot be contested in any way. It is also true that the dialogue that continued for so many years, could not have determined a reciprocity of interests. For the first time, today, I categorically ask myself how much influence our closeness had on Gentile's reactions, both positive and negative.

To me, what comes from these pages seems to clarify the reciprocal relationship that continues until today. Gentile has repeatedly written about me. I have gathered these writings in an appendix to my volume on Giovanni Gentile published in 1969. They consist of thirty pages, covering the years 1931 to 1938.

It is necessary to add to these pages an additional page previously published and printed again this year in the second edition of *L'idealismo italiano e i suoi critici* [*Italian Idealism and Its Critics*, 1930]. I have reprinted it to prove Gentile's consensus of that side of my philosophical activity that reached a point of total convergence with his. Those were the years that followed the positivistic experience when a new light permeated my soul without doubt or reserve. Afterwards, year after year, my attitude changed in an ever-increasing manner until it reached the collision outlined in *La vita come ricerca* [*Life as a Search*] in 1937 and did not find complete expression until after the death of Gentile in *Storia della mia ricerca* [*History of My Search*] in 1974.

What was the nature of my reservations about Gentile's philosophy? At this point, the development of my thought and Gentile's attitude acquired a meaning that must be apparent from the above discussion regarding the transformation of Gentile's actual idealism during the Roman period.

In summary, it is possible to conclude that the main changes in Gentile's doctrine deal with the experience of his work on the *Enciclopedia*. The first transformation was the reconciliation of science and philosophy as outlined in the Introduction to the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* and in his observations of 1930–1931.

A different transformation took place in the doctrine of fascism and in the progressive movement to a corporativism understood in an ever more socialistic sense. A third and more profound transformation took place in the conception of humanism and the School reform with his affirmation of the "humanism of work." These are all changes that materialized soon after work on the *Enciclopedia* began and during which time our collaboration became more profound. Our lives became united in a common goal that went beyond ourselves as individuals and conditioned our way of thinking.

The breakup took place in 1937 with the publication of *La vita come ricerca*, when my fascism and my actual idealism ended. Our paths diverged in a significant way.

Actual idealism clashed with problematicism. Problematicism began its journey recounted in the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* and gradually overturned actual idealism. The elegant proof of this is found in my theory of the end of self-awareness, resting in opposition to the philosophy of absolute self-awareness. The long history of my relationship with Gentile ended in a decisive break. But was it really a true break? Without a doubt, actual idealism and problematicism are linked through a single principle that generated both of them. In other words, they were born from a clash that took place on the same philosophical ground and, as a result, problematicism is the negation of actual idealism, as well as its most genuine fruit.

Eight

BENEDETTO CROCE

I had my first contact with Benedetto Croce in 1922 when I asked him if I could include his name on the list of the sponsoring committee for *La nuova politica liberale*, a journal founded by a group of young scholars with Giovanni Gentile as an advisor. In addition to me, the other editors were Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice, Dionisio Anzilotti, and Gioacchino Volpe. Croce accepted, and his name appeared on the issues of the journal. He was a fascist at the time and remained one more or less until the second half of 1924, when Gentile left the Ministry of Public Education and Alessandro Casati, a liberal, succeeded him. Meanwhile, a controversy developed between Croce and me regarding the proliferation of philosophical studies. The letter that Croce sent me on 31 March 1923 [deals with this controversy] and it now appears in its entirety on pages 97–98 in the first volume of his *Epistolario* [*Epistolary*], published in 1967 by the Italian Institute for Philosophical Studies. In this letter, Croce writes:

> Dear Mr. Spirito:
>
> I have read your article on the "Educazione nazionale" ["National Education"].[1] I never intended to impose upon or provide others with a ready-made system. On the contrary, I maintain that every system continuously renews and modifies itself (though imperceptibly) even inside the mind of its author. Instead, I simply advise against championing solutions and problems that are already exhausted and against being dogmatic. I give others the advice that works for me: study history trying to benefit from what has been learned and let the new philosophy mature by itself according to its own internal logic and one's personal needs, a philosophy that serves as a critique of concrete reality. I, too, have theorized about the unity of philosophy and life, but I refuse to interpret this unity in the senseless manner I have seen recently done in the new and deplorable political journal.[2] When idealism and fascism are seen as one, this is due to either a wrong deduction or a move forward based on ill-conceived principles, for it is obviously a stupid conclusion. After all, I feel all the recent Italian philosophical studies are superficial and empty. This bothers me, because my spirit abhors superficiality and emptiness. I wanted to read your article in the journal, but I have not been able to retrieve that particular issue because the issues are not in order. Currently, I am immersed in a historical work, so I allow a temporary disorder to reign in my library.[3]

After that, Croce had a more or less hostile attitude toward me and insisted on opposing every school of thought, including those created by Gentile's young disciples. Gentile founded the *Giornale critico della*

filosofia italiana, conceived as a training ground for his students, while Croce was sharpening his attacks against those same young intellectuals. At one point, Croce concluded a letter dated 11 January 1920 with the following discriminatory statement: "That is why I drew a line between you and those parroting schoolboys."[4]

Croce saw Gentile as being on one side while the schoolboys were on the other. No bridge existed between the two. Two worlds were sharply opposed. Croce had no quarrels about dividing the two. He would praise the journal, but in reality he hated it. And I was probably the most hated of them all, for I was the young one who had taken on much of the responsibility for the journal from the beginning. Without passing up any opportunities to aggravate the situation, he attacked my corporativism as *communistic actual idealism*. This was almost like denouncing me to the ruling fascist regime and was an accusation that perhaps had an influence when Minister Cesare De Vecchi intervened.

This is not the place to review the main phases of the relationship between Croce's philosophical demands and those of my actual idealism, which continued to develop for many years. That story is tied to too many philosophical and political events to be dealt with in a single shot. Instead, it is more appropriate to consider here the final phase of my conflict with Croce from November 1949 to his death.

While reorganizing the archives of the Giovanni Gentile Foundation for philosophical studies, I had the opportunity to find Gentile's most important correspondence with his professors, students, and friends. The most important was with Croce, which went on for thirty years, from 1896 to 1924. As I read it closely, I realized its exceptional value both as a record of the lives of Croce and Gentile and a history of Italian culture as it evolved from positivism to idealism. What became increasingly clear to me was the decisive influence Gentile's thought had on Croce and the need to reverse the current view of Gentile as a disciple of Croce, to that of Croce as a disciple of Gentile. It was a radical change that eliminated any philosophical meaning with respect to the difference in their ages [Croce was born in 1866; Gentile in 1875].

Having made this discovery, I felt that the only course of action was to publish the complete correspondence. However, to do so, I needed Croce's permission. So I turned to Croce, informing him of the finding and asked him for the necessary authorization. This is the open letter of November 1949, which I published in Volume 1, 1950, of the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*:[5]

> Illustrious Senator:
>
> After more than five years since Gentile's death, it is now possible to look at his life and his work with a new, critical attitude and with a more accurate historical perspective. Today, we can approach his work

without the passion generated by the presence of his strong personality, with more objective aims and a more profound philosophical interest. The studies the Giovanni Gentile Foundation is collecting in a series of volumes [the second and third have just been published, while the fourth is in the process of being printed], have resulted in a new literature on actual idealism and cast a new light on the diverse aspects of its varied and conflicting interpretations. Neither an enthusiastic and dogmatic adherence, nor a peremptory and incomprehensible condemnation of actual idealism is needed any longer. Instead, it is necessary to go beyond both interpretations to explore the depths of actual idealism and bring to the surface what could not previously be objectively analyzed because of too much emotional involvement. Many young intellectuals, who can no longer be considered students, approach Gentile's works feeling they cannot continue their own philosophical investigations without exploring his thought as a means of comprehending contemporary philosophy. This has become a compelling necessity, whether we like it or not, which is increasingly felt as a compulsory passage.

A new demand has emerged that supersedes all others in this new critical analysis of actual idealism, attracting the attention of the most serious scholars. This involves the historical reconstruction of the various stages Gentile went through in elaborating and improving his system. It is now obvious that the preliminary problem in pursuing such a goal is that of clarifying the relationship between Gentile and Croce. In the absence of this clarification, any possibility of articulating a true historical perspective is impossible. Right now, the scholar's investigation is diverted—at least in part and in the majority of cases—by certain errors and prejudices consolidated over a period of almost half a century. These errors and prejudices can be summarized in one sentence: the view that relates Gentile to Croce must be reversed to one that relates Croce to Gentile in a chronological, as well as, a logical succession. For example, in the most recent book on actual idealism by Manlio Ciardo, *Un fallito tentativo della riforma dello hegelismo. L'idealismo attuale* [*A Failed Attempt to Reform Hegelianism: Actual Idealism*, 1948], the Foreword contains certain statements formulated as historically proven and incontrovertible: "The program of work (the positivistic criticism of Hegelianism) was defined in Italy by Croce in his book, *Ciò che è vivo e ciò che è morto della filosofia hegeliana* [*What Is Living and What Is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel,* 1906].[6] Contemporary idealism tried to resolve the same problems dealt with by Hegel without overcoming the obstacle in which Hegel remained stuck."

You are well aware, Senator, you have indicated in various incidental

passages in your books the true nature of the historical relationship between Croce and Gentile. You know Gentile's thought had a definite influence on you since 1896, when Gentile, twenty-one years old and still a university student, got you involved in the philosophical studies, which gained momentum at the beginning of the century. You also know that this influence was felt in every area of your research, beginning with aesthetics and historical materialism.

First, in regard to aesthetics: in a letter to you published in the 12 December 1913 issue of the journal *La Voce*, and subsequently reprinted in *Saggi critici* [*Critical Essays*], Gentile wrote:[7]

"Since the beginning, I have applauded your return to De Sanctis's aesthetics in whose theory of form I saw a close resemblance to the idea I had conceived regarding Kant's form of knowledge, as an absolute form establishing its own content. Among my most cherished memories of the first years of our friendship is your letters expressing warm approval of one of my booklets, *Arte sociale* [*Social Art*], dated 1896, in which I responded to certain useless discussions about a 'social' art that must mirror the spirit of its time and be rooted in public acceptance. I noted such acceptance or aversion, with which the artist had to deal, could only be directed to theoretical art, a formulation of art, not a concrete, a real art; neither could it be directed to the content of art, because, I said, the work of art is a reality and has to be considered as such. One cannot predetermine what art can or should be before it is, unless one wants to experience the negation suffered by the rhetorics throughout the centuries. Since a work of art is a reality in itself and not a set of rules and theories, the content cannot be discussed before it actually becomes content, that is, before it has been put into a work of art. The work of art will or will not be known as art as a result of the expression of the content, born at the same time as the expression in the mind of the artist. Content does not exist separate from the form, nor before the form; instead, content and form coexist in spirit. As no content occurs without form, nor form without content, so no form and no content exists without the spirit, which generates both in perfect unity. Around this concept of the abstract nature of content considered by itself (from which you derived an abundant and systematic series of corollaries in your *Estetica* [*Aesthetics*], I too wrote a good deal, in 1899 in *Il concetto della storia* [*The Concept of History*]), distinguishing an abstract content from a concrete content, which is the only reality for it is form. This is the problem over which both you and I have labored for so many years.[8]

At first glance, this letter seemed to express only agreement. In reality, the gracious respect that Gentile always had for you, even when your philosophical conflicts were fierce and unresolvable, hides the issue of

whom originated the earlier and decisive teaching. "And around this concept, from which you later derived...." This, "you later," is an implicit contraposition to an "I," not liking to place itself in the forefront. In reality, Gentile's consensus was only apparent. You were still far from Gentile's position upon which he continued to insist until the end of 1898, notably in an unpublished letter dated 16 October of that year, the beginning of a more real understanding for you.

When you responded on 16 November, you began to share Gentile's position. In 1899, you arrived at a complete agreement, publicly expressed in *I trattatisti italiani del Concettismo e Baltasar Gracián* [*The Italian Writers of Conceptism and Baltasar Gracián*], read in the 18 June session of the Pontanian Academy:

I must confess that even I, in my writings touching upon seventeenth-century literature, was receptive to a distinction of this kind. I considered seventeenth-century literary content as flawed; not aesthetically flawed, but flawed in such a way as to render those seventeenth-century works of little interest even when they possess a simple and natural form. This distinction is misleading, and as far as I'm concerned, is born as errors are born, that is, as a result of a lack of proper consideration. What at first glance in the seventeenth-century works I called content, is also form, since it is impossible in any case to separate content from form and pinpoint the content outside its form.[9] And in a note, you added: "My dear and worthy friend Giovanni Gentile, with his important work, "Il concetto della storia" ["The Concept of History"], made me realize my mistake."[10]

A decisive step had been taken, after which the first edition of *Estetica* could be published. You had begun to learn from Gentile what the Kantian synthesis *a priori* was. So, when *Estetica* was published in 1902, Gentile reviewed it as an expression of "true idealistic philosophy." He, however, was not convinced of the completeness of your conversion and immediately added: "Whether or not this philosophy is totally acceptable is not a question that can be debated in this review. Perhaps it must take one more step in order to fulfill the legitimate and unquestionable demands of reason; not only do I believe, but I am sure, that sooner or later Croce will take such a step, moved by the vigor of mind splendidly demonstrated in this work."[11] You were on the verge of reconciling yourself with Hegel, in whose reading you immersed yourself in 1905, as you have stated: "I became closer to Hegel once more, thanks to the friendship and collaboration of Gentile, in whom Bertrando Spaventa's tradition was reborn, rendered more flexible, more modern, more open to criticism and self-criticism, and more varied in spiritual interests."[12]

If we move from *Estetica* to the other studies to which you dedicated yourself in the last five years of the past century, then Gentile's presence and influence are equally undeniable. The correspondence dealing with the interpretation of Marx and his historical materialism that began in 1896 being one example. Then in 1897, Gentile published in Amedeo Crivellucci's journal, *Studi storici*, his first essay on the philosophy of Marxism, and in 1898, Antonio Labriola berated you for the lack of depth with which you interpreted such a philosophy. You promised to reconsider, but evidently the fact that you had not yet approached Hegel's thought impeded you from proceeding further in your understanding of the philosophical premises of Marxism. Consequently, in 1899, when you decided to gather your essays on the subject in the volume, *Materialismo storico ed economia marxista* [*Historical Materialism and Marxist Economics*], you felt the need to make certain clarifications in the Preface. In your own words, "as far as the first phase of Marx's thought and his philosophical and metaphysical construction was concerned, I have had the opportunity to refer to it with the purpose of suggesting that the issues of historical origin and of historical criticism need a resolution rather than to be resolved by me. However, the subject has been now analyzed by the valiant professor Giovanni Gentile in *La filosofia di Marx* [*The Philosophy of Marx*] to which I address you regarding this issue."[13]

Returning to the study of Marxism immediately after World War II, you wrote: "Gentile, at that time a follower of the Hegelian school of Naples, gave a clear demonstration in his early work, *La filosofia di Marx*, of Marx's Hegelianism and of the contradictory position in which Marx found himself by substituting Matter for Ideas. I, accepting now as I did then, his demonstration of this historical philosophical point, wanted to focus on another point which until now has not been considered...."[14]

Finally, if we move from the studies on aesthetics and on historical materialism to a general consideration of your philosophical system—that is, the Philosophy of Spirit—the discourse becomes clearer and reaches the center of the problem involving the relationship between Gentile and Croce. The heart of the matter is the reconciliation with Hegel's philosophy constituting the fundamental characteristic of Italian idealism in the first half of this century. In your 1904 note, "Siamo noi hegeliani?" ["Are We Hegelians?"], even with many reservations, you admitted "it is our firm conviction that philosophy cannot be revived and advanced except by reestablishing a link to Hegel....After him, the world was divided between appearance and hidden reality, between matter and God, between brutal facts and transcendent values. Philosophy, not bad metaphysics, was dethroned."

So the problem can be put historically in these terms: Where do you happen to fall within the spectrum of Italian Hegelianism of this century? The reason for Gentile's place within this spectrum is evident from an historical and philosophical point of view. The transition from Spaventa to Donato Jaja to Gentile is quite clear. However, the same cannot be said of you. Your initial spiritual formation comes from a different background, as you have fully documented. You wrote: "My state of mind was one of being a Desanctisian idealist in aesthetics; Herbartian in ethics and in the more general conception of values; anti-Hegelian and antimetaphysical in the theory of history and in the more general view of reality; and a naturalist and an intellectualist in epistemology. These elements, coexisting, not in perfect harmony, yet not completely disarrayed, but juxtaposed in a temporary and incomplete order, are present in some articles published by me before I was twenty years old [collected in the previously mentioned *Juvenilia* [*Early Writings*], and later, after the long pause created by my studies of an erudite nature, in my first philosophical writings on the *Concetto della storia* and *La critica letteraria* [*Literary Criticism*]."[15]

As far as your uncle, Bertrando Spaventa, is concerned, you have clearly denied that he influenced you in any way. If, therefore, you became Hegelian after being anti-Hegelian, and if your philosophical system can be tied to the Hegelian tradition, it is clear, as you state, that this is due to the work of Gentile. Since the evolution of Italian Hegelianism moved from Spaventa to Jaja and arrived at Gentile, then the further evolution was from Gentile to Croce and not *vice versa*. If we want further proof of this, we can find it in your *Logica* [*Logic*], where with regard to the identification of philosophy and history, the true "raison d'être" of a rigorous idealism, you wrote: "I could never arrive at a perfect identity of history and philosophy, because in me the prejudice still persisted that philosophy might have a form in a certain way free from the bonds of history, and constitute in relation to it a prior and independent moment of the spirit. That is, something abstract persisted in my idea of philosophy. But this prejudice and this abstractness have been overcome little by little. Not only have my studies in the Philosophy of the Practical greatly helped me to overcome them, but also and above all, the studies of my dearest friend Giovanni Gentile [to whom my mental life owes many other aids and stimulations), concerning the relationship between philosophy and the history of philosophy (particularly, *La Critica* 7, pp. 142–149), which I have broadened to include the relationship of philosophy and history in general."[16] This is a precious and unequivocal confession, even if it is followed by the statement concerning your having broadened the relationship between philosophy and history in general. This "broadening" exists only in your imagination, as is evident to anyone

who understands these things and is acquainted with Gentile's thought. After all, in the same works of Gentile that you mentioned, any doubt on the matter is eliminated in the most definite way. Indeed, Gentile says: "The identification of philosophy with the history of philosophy (as well as with history in general, for outside of philosophy I do not see any spiritual "actuality," nor outside of the spirit do I see a reality of any kind of which history can be written), is not solely understood by a *parte objecti* [by the object], but also by a *parte subjecti* [by the subject].[17]

The necessary conclusions that can be drawn from these random statements and from a careful study of the development of your thought, as well as the thought of Gentile, is that your thought is directly derived from Gentile's thought. You were the first of Gentile's followers who initiated the school that has thrived since the second decade of this century. As a result, the first line of the Preface to the above-mentioned book by Ciardo must be corrected by moving the first date as far back as 1896, and the final date until at least—but certainly much beyond—the point your philosophy is discussed. It is impossible to understand the reasons for the evolution of your thought without first being aware of how you progressively eliminated your previous spiritual and philosophical background as a result of the continuous pressure of actual idealism—actual idealism that in the last few decades you have unjustly scoffed at, after having been nourished by it. Do you remember? In the discussion carried on in the last pages of *La Voce* in 1913–1914, you stated that you were not persuaded by actual idealism, adding: "Why am I not persuaded? Or, more specifically, what is it that does not persuade me? Clearly, for the most part, I am in agreement since I find in it the confirmation of the general results that I achieved after more than a decade of dynamic philosophical activity: my criticism of the traditional three-way division of philosophy into Logic or Metaphysics, the Philosophy of Nature, and the Philosophy of Spirit as maintained by the Hegelian system; My condemnation of the dualism that Hegelianism did not overcome; My denial of a Phenomenology outside of a philosophical system and the deductive process of the abstract categories of logic; my dislike of metaphysics, including the Metaphysics of the Mind when it is believed to be above reality; in short, my reduction of philosophy to a pure Philosophy of Spirit that does not separate itself from Nature (as in the German philosophy of values), rather completely resolving within itself the concept of Nature. When you accept these statements as true, we are on the same plane. When you say absolute spiritualism, you share the essence of my philosophy."[18] Aside from the use of "my philosophy" that can be substituted for "your philosophy" in this very important confession, you specify a date over ten years ago, linking you to the

date of the foundation of *La Critica*. Only at that point, after years of help and encouragement, was Gentile successful in convincing you of the importance of idealism and philosophy. Since that time, Senator, your philosophical efforts have been aimed at destroying the basic premises from which you started. Anyone who studies your works closely will realize that you have progressively disavowed the basic foundation of your first philosophical system in the light of actual idealism. I demonstrated the validity of this last statement—primarily in the field of aesthetics—in *La vita come arte* [Life as Art, 1941], so there is no need to discuss it again. You are not aware of the influence Gentile has had on you, because you have been totally absorbed in pointing out the differences between you and Gentile and in reclaiming the importance of "mine" as opposed to "yours." Fortunately, the very logical strength of your mind nullifies your polemical attitude. You are destined to rediscover your roots in actual idealism.

If all of this is true—just the mention of it demonstrates it is true—how do we explain the persistence of holding the contrary position, as well as the delay in the historical recognition of the actual nature of the relationship between you and Gentile? Many diverse reasons occurred for this: the difference in your ages; your earlier fame in cultural areas outside philosophy; the early success of *La Critica*, above all in the broader field of literary criticism; and the later publication of Gentile's works in a systematized form; also the difficulty of changing labels and judgments once they have become established. However, beyond these indisputably valid reasons is another fundamental one: the difference between your attitude and that of Gentile. Gentile was always reluctant to oppose "mine" and "yours"; in contrast, you never reciprocated this generous attitude. You did occasionally recognize the truth of the relationship, and one could have reached the right conclusion from your scattered statements. The mention I have just made of them indicates that you did, indeed, openly and explicitly acknowledge his influence; however, there are many ways of telling the truth. Your way is to simultaneously say and not say, to make a statement and to then retract it, to the point of endorsing opinions and writings such as those of Ciardo, which seem to have been created expressly to confuse ideas and distort the historical judgment. This approach has evidently worsened in the last few decades as political passions have prevailed above all other considerations. Unfortunately, this has been your approach since your first philosophical works. In *Estetica*, for example, where you write about form and content at great length, discuss De Sanctis and his interpretation of form and content, and expound upon the history of aesthetic doctrines up through the present, Gentile is mentioned only once in a footnote dealing with Paolo Raffaele Troiano and Francesco De Sarlo, without one single reference to Gentile's own

philosophy. Even in the essay, "Saggio sullo Hegel" ["Essay on Hegel"], Gentile's name is never mentioned (neither to agree nor to disagree with him), despite the fact that you were introduced to Hegel's philosophy by your friend. These things are too obvious and significant not to be intentional and occur at a time when you must have been most aware of your intellectual debt to Gentile.

Your acknowledgment and recognition of this debt was quite different in your many discussions with Gentile, as well as in the many letters in which you stressed the results of those conversations. Today, reading them again after about fifty years, one feels both strong emotion and great surprise. It is the surprising discovery of a different Croce: one who is capable of a sincere friendship, unfettered by vanity; a trusting, affectionate Croce who repeatedly seeks support, help, and guidance, who listens and learns with an open heart and mind—in contrast to the public Croce—who constantly instructs and reprimands and never engages in productive discussion. It is the discovery of a better and greater Croce. Those 1,013 letters from the period 1896 to 1924, housed at the Giovanni Gentile Foundation, have come to light; it is possible that even more exist. They constitute an important documentation of contemporary Italian idealism that should be made available for scholarly analysis. Permit me, Senator, on behalf of the Foundation, to request your permission to publish these letters along with the letters from Gentile to you, which you most likely possess. I would like to publish all of them, or, if you prefer, at least some of them. If you think it would be best to exclude the most recent letters, we could limit ourselves to the 527 letters written between 1896 and 1913, that is, up to the eve of World War I, to the explosion of the great political passions. Several decades have passed since then; hence, the private nature of those documents has ceased to be an issue.

In 1913, when you wanted to make your debate with Gentile public ("because this is not a private or personal matter"), you provided the necessary documents for an accurate historical assessment. The recent study by Mario Corsi on the *Annali della Scuola Normale di Pisa* (1948, Volumes 3–4), especially the section on "Il pensiero giovanile di Benedetto Croce" ["The Philosophical Thought of Young Benedetto Croce"], benefitted from private correspondence that you made available to him. Why do you believe it is not as important to make the remaining documents public, especially those from the decisive decade 1896 to 1906?

It seems fitting to me that the end of your personal relationship with Gentile should be marked by this collection of corresponce, which you could edit and annotate. Until now, the nature of your relationship with Gentile has been obscured by passion and ends at the page in your diary

where you comment on Gentile's death. With all due respect, Senator, it is an ugly page; and we hope the last in a long and painful parenthesis in your relationship with Gentile. Today those passions can be forgotten and to do so would be to return to the sweetness and serenity of the time before that painful parenthesis began.

Rome, November 1949."

Croce answered my letter with a "Postilla" [Marginal Note] published in Volume 16 of the *Quaderni della critica*, March 1950, pp. 97–100:

This review of Manlio Ciardo's book *Natura e storia nell'idealismo attuale* [*Nature and History in Actual Idealism*], was already in print when Professor Ugo Spirito sent me an open letter published in the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* (1950, nr. 1) in which, referring to some ingenuous statements I made in my youth, he adopts the air of one who seems about to reveal to the world something new and mysterious. These statements are the same ones I have published myself and have referred to on many occasions. During my youth, it was never my intention to become a philosopher like him and the other professors of philosophy who devoted a great deal of time and energy to this type of study. Neither did I want to be a serious ascetic like them, studying philosophy day and night to the exclusion of everything else. In contrast, I followed my impulses and my spontaneous attraction to literature and learning in general. Even though at times I was called to philosophical and literary meditation, these interests were not my ultimate goals in life and, therefore, remained private as a pleasurable activity, or as an illness from which we free ourselves as best we can and as soon as possible. Indeed, philosophical intention played a very small part in the lecture I presented in 1893 at the Pontanian Academy in Naples on the topic "Storia ridotta sotto il concetto generale dell'arte" ["History Subsumed under the Concept of Art"]. In it, I expressed a strong claim toward history as the knowledge of the individual, as opposed to the positivistic and philosophical knowledge of the time, postulating that history was a science to be perfected in the same manner as natural science. Antonio Labriola, my philosophy teacher at the University of Rome (who at times was seduced by the idea of reducing history to a science), immediately understood the importance of my lecture. The most famous German historical methodologist of the time, Ernst Bernheim, honored it in the second edition of his *Lehrbuch* [*Manual*] by praising the strength of its logic. More recently, Robin Collingwood referred to it once again as the beginning of a new direction for the theory of history. My interest in the theory of history, together with the interest in the theory of art inherited from Francesco De Sanctis, greatly influenced (in addition to my sincere desire for a better world) my study of both Marxism and economics

following the example of Labriola, from which I derived new issues for my philosophical activity. In my mind, this interest in philosophy was incidental to, and almost a parenthesis in, my studies of history and literature. In 1895, Gentile, who was a student in Pisa and a student of Jaja (who himself was Spaventa's student), asked me about the possibility of creating a book on Spaventa's writings. I knew Gentile through letters, and later on a personal basis. He was studying philosophy, and although he was much younger than I, he seemed to me a much older, more mature person, and, as I stated then and subsequently, whose conversation was pleasant and informative. I cannot say whether or when our dialogues were useful to him or made an impression on him, because such accounts of give and take in the quest for truth have always seemed to me base, stupid, and ridiculous; accounts that only men lacking in cultural refinement, ignorant as they are of the delicate and intimate phenomena of the spiritual condition, can transform into objects of conjecture and cheap discussion.

It is true, I became attached to Gentile with fraternal affection and became his trusted friend. In 1902, when I designed the program for *La Critica*, I selected him as my collaborator and friend. I would have liked to add his name as director of the journal. However, we laughingly concluded that being the only two collaborators, two directors would be one too many. But, obvious as it is, we never gave in to the other's way of thinking. The actual idealism of which Professor Spirito speaks has nothing to do with the recollections of those years, since it matured fifteen years later, around 1910. I immediately saw the serious error on Gentile's part regarding his nullification of philosophy into a pan-logistic mysticism by exaggerating and crystallizing one of Spaventa's ill-conceived theories. For several years, Gentile and I had many amicable discussions on this philosophical point. However, I felt that since it did not involve a private disagreement, I could and had to bring it out into the open to set the record straight; which I did in 1913 in a long and well-thought out letter first published in the journal *La Voce* in Florence, and afterward in *La Critica*. Setting aside my polemics with Gentile, I enjoyed tormenting his young disciples, of whom many were attracted by his simplistic theories. Our personal relationship was not troubled by my actions and remained cordial. We "agreed to disagree" and I felt quite comfortable with the arrangement that emerged between us. Since Gentile's specialty was pedagogy, it was with great joy that I received the news of his nomination as Minister of Public Education, and when, as Minister of Public Education, his actions displeased fascism and Mussolini—who wanted no complications with respect to education—I came to his defense with an article in the *Giornale d'Italia* just as Mussolini was about to remove him from his position. Mussolini, after reading my article,

refused to accept Gentile's resignation since my intervention had resolved the problem. If I had not come to his defense, and had let him resign, perhaps he would have become disgusted with fascism and would have returned to his old colleagues who had already formed the opposition or were becoming part of it. Gentile further involved himself with fascism. Neither a student of history nor law, he headed a commission for the reform (or rather the subversion of the Constitution), suggested the requirements of political allegiance for university professors, manipulated philosophy to extract arguments supportive of the regime, and proclaimed Mussolini a philosopher, as today the Russians do with Stalin. The fact that he went over to fascism was the only true reason behind my estrangement from him. However, when fascism fell, I, holding Gentile in the highest esteem due to the memory of our old friendship, managed to forget the offenses and damage. Unfortunately, during the brief return of fascism supported by the Germans, he accepted political appointments and went to Florence to make solemn political speeches that provoked his death by a group of communists, later confirmed by communist newspapers. However, putting aside any considerations of a biographical nature and returning to philosophy, the subject at hand, over and above our lives, are our books, Gentile's and mine. They can be read and examined by everyone. From these books one can make historical and philosophical assessments, because they are the only authentic, direct, and true documents on which such assessments can be based. What, then, is this empty chronicle of extrinsic influences that Professor Spirito is talking about? I say "extrinsic" because influences are no longer considered as such when they become "intrinsic," since they become acts of the mind that by absorbing them, transforms them into new truths, or uses them to take divergent and opposite paths. Professor Spirito should be aware of this, and if he is not, he should acquaint himself with this idea and behave accordingly. Perhaps he cannot because of the way he understands philosophy and history. (It seems that the last of his various philosophical theories is a skepticism that defines philosophizing as a spiritual activity, like poetry and art, which never having practice them, he does not understand. This is a strange conclusion for actual idealism (disinterested in aesthetics, if not opposed to it) to reach, becoming the "messenger of death" to poetry and art. But maybe I am not well informed about the latest developments of his philosophy. I have no desire to acquaint myself with them, as I must think of other matters during the brief time I have left to live.) I conclude by saying that he could have honorably saved himself the trouble of sending this "open letter," which sounds like the beginning of gossip that I refuse to fuel, and to which I put an end with this note. The youthful period of my philosophical writing (1893–1900) from my first marginal note on *storia* [history] to the formulation of the

Tesi di estetica [*Theses of Aesthetics*], which outlined, in many aspects, a new *Filosofia dello Spirito* [*Philosophy of Spirit*], has now been narrated with truth and finesse in a beautiful booklet recently published by Rinaldo Garbari, *Genesi e svolgimento storico delle prime tesi di estetica di B. Croce* [*Origin and Historical Development of the First Theses of Aesthetics of B. Croce*]. In it one can even find some of my mistakes, as well as the corrections that I gradually made and am still making, since this is how the serious and honest work of human thought proceeds, no matter how cautious one is.

Benedetto Croce's response to my open letter has an historical value that has not been adequately noted. It reads like a new, short autobiography stressing the principal events in his life. The most significant events are those that link him to Gentile from 1895 or 1896 onward.

As usual, Croce is especially hard on me without any real justification. What really matters, however, is his ostentatious refusal to honor my request. He does not say "yes," but his "no" has no meaning. He says "no" because the true historical documents are "our books" (his and Gentile's), generally available for reading by all. From them, it is possible to arrive at a philosophical and historical assessment "since they are the only authentic, direct, and true documents on which these assessments can be based." With this, Croce abruptly ends his response. Subsequently, he praises the short work by Garbari on the first *Tesi di Estetica*. Evidently, Croce cannot assign an exclusively extrinsic value to those nearly 2,000 letters. They contain much philosophical discussion—as important as that contained in his books. Why then did he refuse to allow the publication of the letters? Why did he see fit to publish his correspondence with Casati but not with Gentile?

Croce's attitude was maintained by his daughters. Any attempt to persuade them to publish the letters was rebuffed, including requests by some of Croce's best friends (Mattioli, Chabod, Antoni, and Sasso). At a conference in Genoa (29–30 March 1964), organized by M. F. Sciacca and devoted to the philosophy of Gentile, Guido Calogero made one more appeal, but to no avail. At one point, confronted with such a negative response, Benedetto Gentile illegally published Croce's first one hundred letters written between 27 June 1896 and 23 December 1899, in the *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*. After a complaint filed by Croce's daughters, an order restraining further publication was issued. In the meantime, this became a *cause célèbre*. Consequently, an agreement was reached between the Giovanni Gentile Foundation and Croce's daughters. Both sets of cor-respondence were to be published by November 1972, twenty years after Croce's death. The Giovanni Gentile Foundation honored this commitment and began to publish the first of five volumes of the letters from Gentile to Croce at the end of 1972. However, Croce's daughters have not yet published with the Mondadori Publishing House the letters that Croce wrote to Gentile.

Nine

BENITO MUSSOLINI

I met Benito Mussolini for the first time at the Institute of the Italian Encyclopedia, where he had come to acquaint himself with our work. Giovanni Gentile, editor-in-chief of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*], accompanied Mussolini to various departments and introduced him to the principal staff members. When they came to my office, Gentile told him my name. Mussolini stopped and asked whether I was the author of the *Storia del diritto penale* [*History of Criminal Law*, 1925], which had just been published. The book had been put out by a minor publisher, and I had not imagined it would end up in the hands of the Head of State. I was quite young and unknown in intellectual circles. The fact that Mussolini recognized me filled me with warm feelings and gratitude. Years later, in 1930, my book *La critica dell'economia liberale* [*Critique of Liberal Economics*] was published. My interest shifted from criminal law to economics. I immediately sent Mussolini a copy of the book, reminding him of his interest in my *Storia del diritto penale italiano*. I did not attach too much importance to this and I did not expect any acknowledgment. But, on 24 September 1930, I received the following telegram from his secretary Osvaldo Sebastiani: "His Excellency, the Head of the Government, has received your book *La critica dell'economia liberale*. He intends to read it as he read your previous works; he thanks you for your gracious thought. Secretary Sebastiani." Almost a year later on 14 August 1931, Mussolini's press secretary sent me a letter which stated:

> His Excellency, the Head of State, has instructed me to inform you that he has read your book *La critica dell'economia liberale* with great interest. His Excellency pointed out the essay that impressed him the most was the one on Vilfredo Pareto. He added a stronger criticism of Umberto Ricci could have been made.[1]
>
> Cordially yours

Meanwhile, the Congress of Ferrara held in May 1932 was approaching, and I felt it necessary to speak to Mussolini in person about my ideological position. I requested an audience and was granted one on 25 March 1932. The discussion centered on the relationship between fascism and socialism, in particular between fascism and Bolshevism. My view was fascism had to become a super-Bolshevism; capital and labor had to come closer; and it was necessary to direct the workers' interests away from private ownership. I thought that this was the direction "corporative ownership" should take.

I proposed to Mussolini my thesis on corporative ownership be made public at the Congress of Ferrara, even though I feared it would be

misinterpreted. He agreed, and told me it would be best to do so because, in effect, corporative ownership was to become the path of future history. He stressed that once a certain path has been chosen, it must be followed to the end. He concluded by saying that he was convinced capital and labor would ultimately converge and everything would come together in the end, because all signs seemed to point in that direction. His words impressed me very much, and I wrote them down as soon as our meeting ended.

The Congress of Ferrara was only few weeks away, so I began to work on a program, convinced it was compatible with Mussolini's ideas. But was it really compatible? Did it correspond to what Mussolini temporarily approved or did it formulate the tenets of true corporativism?

The truth was my proposal, known in advance at the Ministry of Corporations, caused a great commotion that is not easy to describe. What is certain, however, is both Minister Giovanni Bottai and the Undersecretary Dino Alfieri were either perplexed by my ideals or openly opposed to them. Yet my proposal was suddenly approved and published. Did Mussolini intervene? I don't really know. The commotion erupted at the Congress of Ferrara. Why was a Bolshevik allowed to spout communist propaganda? Why was fascism allowed to be contaminated?

At the Congress, Bottai gave a nice speech. He said one thing, but, in the same breath, said something quite different, deeming it necessary to appear on the cutting edge of political thought, fearful of veering too much to the left. What will the future hold?

Bottai remained hesitant and fearful in the face of growing opposition. Upon returning to Rome, he asked me to resign my position as Professor of Corporative Economics. Naturally, I resigned immediately. I could not say "no" to the person who had always protected me. However, the resignation was denied; I do not know by whom and why. Although the opposition was contained within the top echelons of government, it nevertheless remained pervasive and dangerous. I needed some sort of reassurance to continue the fight. At that point, I thought the best solution was to have a second meeting with Mussolini, scheduled for 17 May 1933. This time I was much more explicit with him. More than a year had passed since the Congress of Ferrara, and by this time both sides had well defined their positions. Which direction should Italy take? I do not know to what extent my words convinced Mussolini, since he agreed with me even on the most controversial and delicate problems. This time too I wrote down his most engaging and important answers.

This is not the place to recall the problems we discussed. My major objection was directed at liberalism. I supported the idea of economic action by the State through the corporations. For example, if the State became a truly corporative system, unemployment would disappear. Corporativism would achieve complete fulfillment only when it moved from the State to society, manifesting itself in a corporative way of life. Many people delude themselves into thinking that corporativism is effective and complete when

it consists solely of schemes and legislated institutions.

When corporativism is achieved, even the problem of abolishing the trade unions—leftovers from the class struggle—will emerge. Indeed, trade unions will be abolished. The trade unions are beginning to realize this while they are being entrusted with cultural and social functions.

Mussolini and I ended up agreeing with each other upon even the most progressive matters. His political style had reached a highly sophisticated level. He was capable of identifying himself with the psychological position of the interlocutor, achieving absolute agreement with that person.

I concluded by telling him we were in perfect agreement on the principles of fascism, and consequently, my position did not deserve to be labeled "unorthodox." Mussolini stressed that my ideas were not unorthodox, but that on the contrary, I was politically and scientifically orthodox. Though great confusion existed, it was nothing of consequence; it was rather the manner in which I expressed my ideas that was well received by some people, causing great commotion after the Congress of Ferrara.

This conversation, as I said, took place on 13 May 1933, but this time Mussolini tried to resolve the conflicts that emerged at the Congress of Ferrara, by clearly expressing his thoughts. Although our conversations enhanced our personal relationship, some wondered what our reciprocal ideological position could possibly be. If I appeared to be a Bolshevik to so many fervent fascists, what, then, was the truth regarding my ideas? By now the issue had become too important to remain unresolved. Everybody waited anxiously for Mussolini's opinion. It finally came and it was articulated in the most energetic and decisive manner.

The newspaper *Popolo d'Italia* took the initiative by devoting a full page to my *Crisi del capitalismo e il sistema corporativo* [*Crisis of Capitalism and the Corporative System*]. Mussolini himself added a commentary to the work on page two of the 3 October 1933 issue of the paper. His position was clear. The paragraph, "Segnalazione" ["Brief Note"], stated:

> A volume devoted to *Crisi del capitalismo* compiled by the School of Corporative Sciences of the University of Pisa with a preface by S. E. Bottai, was recently published by the Sansoni Publishing House of Florence. The content of the volume is extremely important, due in part to the prominence of the contributions of those who were chosen from among the major capitalist countries. It is a collective volume, where one can find well known names, such as Gaetan Pirou (French), Werner Sombart (German), Evan Durbin (English), Ernst M. Patterson (American), and Ugo Spirito (Italian). The last-named, Spirito, who as a result of the Congress of Ferrara has become the *bête noire* of those who still cling to the splintered rock of economic liberalism, published a profound and coherent study in which he goes beyond the opposing positions of liberal and socialist economists. He brings forth his point

> of view regarding the identity between the individual and the State, expressing a thesis that does not deserve the *vade retro* [regressive attitude] of easily scandalized, ignorant people who detest every type of philosophical reasoning. Spirito's theses do not seem to be excessively divergent from the purest orthodox doctrine—see the entry on fascism in the *Enciclopedia Italiana.* For this reason, we have published the thirteen pages that Spirito dedicates to the *Crisi del capitalismo e il sistema corporativo* in this issue. No one can contest the clearness of his historical analysis, the rigor of his argumentation, and the logic of his conclusions. The doctrinal investigation on the salient phenomena of contemporary life is useful to the regime. These are the reasons why we informed all the high officials about the book and the article.

The results of Mussolini's comments were extremely important. Mussolini had spoken and his opinion carried the mark of the true interpretation of corporativism. Until that point, no one really knew where he stood. The sentence had been handed down in a most explicit and definitive manner.

Upon consideration of what was printed at that time, it is possible to perceive, with nearly absolute unanimity, the prevailing atmosphere. It is impossible to forget that within fascism, the contrast between the reactionary and the revolutionary currents was always quite strong and, as a result, the future of fascism was uncertain. What would happen if an open conflict erupted?

It was October 1933, and people and events took unpredictable turns. Who would be the victor? The fundamental historical outcome, resulting from Mussolini's statements made during our conversations on 25 March 1932 and 13 May 1933, as well as his statement made in "Segnalazione" of *Popolo d'Italia* on 3 October 1933, demonstrated his explicit consensus with my ideas and forecasts. No other manifestations appeared to the contrary. What was I to think of his conception of corporativism? The reactionary and revolutionary interpretations of the conflicts arising during those years alternated unpredictably. Because no one had the last word, the problem remained open. It remained unresolved, because of the uncertainty surrounding Mussolini's personal conviction; no one knew whether he was socialist or antisocialist. I believe that I may be the only one who can express a truly objective judgment, since Mussolini confessed himself in an honest manner only to me.

Naturally I have personal and convincing reasons to think the way I do about Mussolini, otherwise, my opinions would be unjustified. The incontrovertible facts at the foundation of my point of view are linked to my first conversation with Mussolini, proving that he was already well acquainted with my ideas and convictions. Only then did his testimony become completely explicit. Our convergence was not the result of somewhat questionable instances of agreement, but of our similar manner of

posing questions and resolving them. Ours was a preliminary conversation, delineating the explicit relationship between fascism and socialism, and even between fascism and Bolshevism. He was the first one to know and approve of my theory on corporative ownership. A multitude of ways exist to express consensus. Mussolini expressed his consensus, basing it on fundamental philosophical principles and showing his understanding of the essential logic of a new general conception of reality.

Time passed, and the questions became even clearer after the Congress of Ferrara. Corporativism reached a scientific level of high philosophical precision, acquiring a systematic form that revealed a superior historical and theoretical depth.

Mussolini was fully aware of this depth and knew how to express it with the "pathos" of the believer. If I were to seriously ask myself about Mussolini's real state of mind, I cannot deny his exceptional adherence to my beliefs. Mussolini was a true revolutionary.

A clear confirmation of my judgment of Mussolini came following a second conversation on 13 May 1933. It was a long conversation. The minutely detailed notes are sufficient enough to illustrate the substance of the conversation itself. This time, Mussolini took the initiative during the conversation by theorizing corporativism both in its essence and in the multiplicity of its aspects. It suffices to recall among other things, the theory relative to the relationship between the trade unions and the corporations. Mussolini gradually explained this matter, as he expressed his ideas in an organic and systematic fashion. He showed the maturity of someone who had personally lived a truly revolutionary historical process. One could find in his words the pleasure of a consensus justified by the same ideal. What made the greatest impression on me, though, was his ability to bring together the various themes and arguments in a logical manner while remaining open to unexpected consequences. Nothing discussed was unrelated to the subject matter of the conversation, since everything discussed had already been fully experienced. Were I to have had a tape recorder, we would now have rare documentation of an original and logical thinker. Mussolini's thought process was never static. It continued to become more profound, and, like an organism, it was capable of enriching itself with the fruit of its own imagination.

Mussolini was able to effectively communicate the basic principles of corporativism. Without a doubt, corporativism could have achieved all of its objectives. The dialectical process marking the development of corporativism continued unpaused even after May 1933.

After months of meditation, Mussolini's consensus was expressed publicly in "Segnalazione," in the 3 October 1933 issue of *Popolo d'Italia*. He reiterated the same principles. Obviously, the brevity of the article did not allow a full treatment of the problems regarding the fundamental principles, but he did cover some essential aspects. Besides the repeated attacks against liberals, he underscored the necessity of overcoming the

opposing positions of liberal economics and socialist economics. In addition, he did not miss the opportunity to hint at the theory of the identification of the individual with the State. The most important point to consider, however, is the entry on fascism in the *Enciclopedia Italiana*. It is common knowledge that the entry on fascism was written by Gentile. Mussolini repeatedly felt the need to associate himself with Gentile when he needed to give precise philosophical content to the principles of the regime.

Until October 1933, Mussolini maintained his faith in the fascist revolution as an expression of faith in actual idealism, shown by his approval of Gentile's School Reform, his admiration for the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, and finally, his acceptance of the communist view of corporativism. Mussolini was the most advanced interpreter of revolutionary demands, both through his actions and the originality of his thoughts. To speak of Mussolini as a procapitalist, reactionary, antisocialist, and so forth, made no sense whatsoever. These condemnations of him by some individuals were absolutely unjustified. Whoever had the opportunity to intimately get to know Mussolini and his revolutionary fervor can have no doubt about this. Each eyewitness can personally vouch for the true Mussolini.

If my account of Mussolini from 1 March 1931 to 3 October 1933 is sufficient to describe his true state of mind, it is not valid with regard to his practical and political behavior. He was capable of anything, appearing even to be against everyone and anyone, including himself and even fascism.

In the meantime, Achille Starace, and above all Cesare De Vecchi, began plotting against me at the time that a juried competition for corporative studies was sponsored by the Academy of Lincei. That was the starting point of a persecution, which escalated dramatically. I was removed from teaching corporative economics at the University of Pisa; I was sent back to Messina to teach philosophy and history of philosophy; I had to cease publishing *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica*; and I was placed under surveillance.

It is obvious that under these conditions I would turn again to Mussolini, asking him for an explanation and for his support. He had staked too much on me to be able to deny me his support. I had always remained the same, but had he? Was there more than one Mussolini? Did the entry on fascism in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* still carry the same meaning?

And so, on 6 November 1934, I wrote to Mussolini. The letter was sent from Il Regio Istituto di Magistero di Messina [The Royal Teacher's College of Messina]:

> Your Excellency, allow me to call to your attention the following facts:[2]
>
> (1) The Judging Commission for Corporative Studies of the Academy of Lincei, aided by his Excellency S. E. Mariano D'Amelio, informed

me through private channels that the prize would have been unanimously awarded to me if insurmountable political charges had not been leveled against me. Under these conditions, I have been advised in a friendly manner to withdraw from the competition. If I decide not to withdraw, they will exclude me from consideration.

(2) After four years of teaching political and economic corporativism at the University of Pisa, I have been sent back by the Minister of Public Education to teach philosophy and the history of philosophy at University of Messina, where I now reside.

(3) The Party Secretary has made clear to me that my activities in the last few months have not been appreciated and so I have not published anything since May of last year.

I turn to Your Excellency—not to the Party Secretary—because only Your Excellency, who has repeatedly authorized and encouraged me to pursue the path I have taken, knows all the preceding facts. As far as the teaching position is concerned, Your Excellency will remember that last year the Department of Literature at the University of Genoa offered me the position of Professor of Philosophy. I then told the President of the University, the Honorable Armando Carlini, and the Dean of the School of Corporative Studies, Honorable S. E. Bottai, that I would have accepted the offer if I was not assured of the position at the University of Pisa. The President and the Director came to visit Your Excellency and on your behalf invited me to decline the offer of the University of Genoa and remain at the University of Pisa. This year, the opposition by the Department has ceased, and, since His Excellency Bottai's teaching position has become vacant, I could have been appointed, without any doubt, to the position of Professor of Political and Economic Corporativism. Instead, I have been sent to Messina, while other professors have been appointed to teaching positions at the University of Genoa, and, if I'm not mistaken, the University of Florence. How can it be that having been the first of the three winners, I was sent to Messina, while the second was sent to Florence, and the third to Genoa?

I do not understand these serious sanctions against me. Your Excellency knows that all my activities have evolved within and according to a preestablished direction. I believe that I did not go beyond the limits. If I erred, I beg Your Excellency to enlighten me on how I can rectify any misunderstanding that has occurred. If, instead, it can be determined that I did not fail in my duties, I do not believe it is useful to force me to abandon studies in which I have already reached some results. I am about to write a treatise on the economic condtions of the past year. In it I would like to present an opposing view to the

treatise of the economists of the liberal school who are still in active teaching positions. Is it truly necessary that I abandon these studies because I am distracted by the duties of my teaching career?

I would also like to carry out a study on the peculiar economic conditions existing at the present time. Your Excellency knows that I was the first one in Italy to speak of economic plans and programmed economy. I would like to continue my efforts of the last few years with all the energy and the faith with which I am capable. I beg Your Excellency to give me the opportunity to continue my work. In particular, I beg Your Excellency to:

(1) Let me know if I can begin writing again on corporative topics, and if so, within what limits.

(2) Allow me to return, while there is still time, to the teaching position at the University of Pisa.

(3) Please remove the political sanctions against me and authorize the Judging Commission of the competition sponsored by the Academy of Lincei to grant me the award to which I believe I am entitled.

Gratefully yours, Ugo Spirito.

I received the following response to my letter from the Secretary of the Head of the Government on 14 November 1935:

Illustrious Professor Spirito, the "Duce" has received your letter of 6 November 1934. Not finding reasons for reversing the decision, he has expressed his desire that you teach in the assigned position.

Sincerely, Osvaldo Sebastiani.

My fascism and my relationship with Mussolini ended like this. De Vecchi had won.[3]

Ten

GIUSEPPE BOTTAI

The anthology of Giuseppe Bottai's *Scritti di Giuseppe Bottai* [*Writings of Giuseppe Bottai*], edited by Roberto Bartolozzi and Riccardo Del Giudice, provides the reader with the opportunity to revisit the complete itinerary of the life of a man who held a significant place in the history of fascism.[1] We should be grateful to these two editors for having shed light on the political and ideological journey of an exceptional personality and on so many aspects of the troubled fascist era. Above all, we should be grateful to Riccardo del Giudice, Bottai's faithful and intelligent friend, for revealing even the innermost secrets of Bottai's soul. Having been associated with Bottai for some of the most important years of my life, this book offered me the chance to reflect again with a more detached perspective on many phases of my fascism and on the reasons for my agreeing and disagreeing with a man with whom I have collaborated through times of hope, as well as through times of disappointment. After rereading Bottai's many writings, spanning different periods of his life, I am now able to express a thorough judgment of the man and his works.

All my writings on fascism, and especially on corporativism, reveal what I expected from Bottai. Moved as I was by revolutionary faith, I gave fascism and corporativism a communistic interpretation, which found its highest expression in my proposal of "corporative ownership" at the Congress of Ferrara in 1932. I expected Bottai's collaboration on this proposal, even though I was aware of the limits imposed by a quite difficult political situation, dominated by capitalistic forces and, above all, by both a liberal and conservative culture, represented by Benedetto Croce and Luigi Einaudi. I understood the prudence of Bottai's actions and I never doubted that we were in agreement on many issues. Today, my judgment of Bottai's actions has changed and with this book I intend to shed light upon the most important principles that inspired Bottai's thoughts and actions during his entire life.

At the Congress of Ferrara, Bottai deemed my conclusions on corporativism completely incorrect. He stated they were "not steps forward in the direction of corporativism, but steps outside corporativism."[2] However, this explicit condemnation did not lead me to doubt his approval because he simultaneously distinguished two tendencies at the Congress—the conservative tendency that wanted to crystallize the corporative system and the other tendency that was decisively innovative and revolutionary. "The second tendency, which I totally support," he said, "would speed the process of transforming the corporative institutions into forms, rules, and functions that are wider, more profound, more organic, and more engaging."[3] Even though this was not much, it seemed to me he agreed more on an inner level with my position than he openly expressed. On the

other hand, our conversations seemed to increasingly confirm the existence of a community of shared ideals that found expression in the School of Corporative Studies at the University of Pisa and influenced the orientation of the students we had in common. The University of Pisa itself did not hesitate to publish *avant-garde* books, including the translation of Stalin's writings and the writings of other Bolsheviks. The school's library received the first copy of the new edition of Karl Marx's works.

Bottai's leftist inclinations were not limited to the ones indicated here. His continuous talk about revolution, his extraordinary military courage, his lifelong willingness to fight in any war, as well as his daring personality, indicate that he was a revolutionary, even in some of his writings. It is enough to mention some passages from Bottai, appearing on page 387 in the journal *Primato*, published on 1 November 1942 to exemplify this:

> we need to clearly affirm the profound meaning, as well as the historical and revolutionary value of fascism, no matter how long this conflict may last. Without twenty years of fascism, without this war, and without the resolute methods of the totalitarian movements, the present democracies that claim they are swept up both by the winds of reform and by the will to renew themselves, would still be basking in their privileges both here and abroad. The appeals for a new world order are the best historical justification for our tormented twenty years. These appeals confirm that the political situation emerging from Versailles was not defensible. That situation was the last expression of a bourgeois world overcome by the immanent laws of the historical process and the just aspirations of some people who vividly felt the socioeconomic harshness of the bourgeois system upon their own backs. If the world today moves in a new direction, the credit cannot be attributed to democracies. This war cannot help but further hasten their crisis and their internal conflicts. After twenty years of fascism, we ask this revolutionary spirit to continue: May "the order" not only be an empirical construction of forces and ideas, a renewed Holy Alliance through a purely diplomatic alchemy of a new Metternich and a new Tallyrand—but rather a profound social movement. We think this is the profound demand that knocks at the door of the modern world and Versailles was only the first fortress to be destroyed.[4]

This was the Bottai I believed in. He not only affirmed my faith, but he made it possible for me to manifest and defend my ideas, at least until 1935. However, as the years went by, he began to appear to me in his truest nature: a "revisionist" not a "revolutionary." He was someone who was open to all the demands and proposals that were historically developing, without any preclusions whatsoever. In his heart, Bottai was fundamentally a liberal. When he tried to define fascism in *Vent'anni e un giorno* [*Twenty Years and One Day*, 1949] his definition of it was not substantially different

from what, at the beginning of the fascist era, had characterized the program of the journal, *La nuova politica liberale*, in which Giovanni Gentile presented his own brand of fascism. That had been precisely Bottai's initial faith, restated in explicit terms, even if it was with a narrower perspective in the last years of his life when he claimed, without a doubt, to be a man of the Right. His liberalism, which took on an *avant-garde* cloak and gave the impression of being the result of a revolutionary faith, in the end revealed itself to be intrinsically tied to the conservative ideal. I must add to all of this, his renewed practice of Catholicism that he reembraced during the years of hiding and exile.

For anyone who would like to familiarize himself with the dominant characteristics of Bottai's political thought, the best description can be found in one of his last writings, published a few months before his death as a quasi-epilogue to his life. Speaking of the responsibility of the Right and, in general, of the groups that make up the middle-class in Italy, Bottai observed that for them:

> Risorgimento, country, permanent historical interests of the nation, moral values, and freedom as an ideal of civilization, culture, and political method were neither valuable nor worthy of respect. At most, they were only used as rhetorical formulas. Gradually, following the demise of the Right, these values were weakened and made useless, allowing the emergence of leftist ideology. Indeed, both the traditional elites and the political middle-class elite surrendered to demagogy. The political situation of the period 1919–1929 from which fascism originated, was the result of the decay of values traditionally cherished by the Right. As a result, the situation provoked a reaction that became the fundamental basis of fascism. Because of this, both the middle class and segments of the traditional aristocracy, including the nobility and the army, embraced a fascism explicitly linked to the historical Right through Gentile's mediation. The Right had found young followers courageous enough to confess their allegiance to the conservatives. It quickly adopted the old path of the political Right that maintained prudence, wisdom, and an open view toward the political ascent of the lower classes. The defeat of fascism, with the end of World War II, took with it both the political Right and the institution of the Monarchy, one of the pillars of the national political tradition. This situation, in turn, sparked the reemergence of leftist ideologies and resulted in the abandonment of nationalist and conservative values.[5]

Anyone can see the enormous distance that separates these statements from Bottai's previous statements outlined above on the meaning and function of fascism. However, the distance is perhaps more of an illusion than a reality, because Bottai's pronouncements in 1932, as well as those made in the period between 1932 and 1942, are inserted almost as a

parenthesis in a life that found its real political creed in Gentile's interpretation. It is significant Bottai felt the need to refer to the Gentile of *La nuova politica liberale*. This parenthesis was due, in great part, to the prestige enjoyed by the University of Pisa where he was the president. At this point, we can accord Bottai the true historical significance that is due him. The time he spent at Pisa was characterized by a liberal spirit, open to thought and discussion, even if its expression was not terribly convincing.

At the end of his life, Bottai returned to a conservative ideology and tried to support it by using Gentile's defense of the historical Right of the Risorgimento, made during the first years of fascism. However, Gentile's journey veered in the opposite direction from that of Bottai's. Gentile's last work, *Genesi e struttura della società* [*Genesis and Structure of Society*], represents an epilogue in which the interpretation of corporativism has acquired a meaning close to communism. The historical Right is no longer worthy of representing a political ideal.

This, in summary, is Bottai's history, as well as the thread that allows us to understand Bottai both as a scholar and as a politician. His personality has its place in the history of fascism, an unmistakable place with an unmistakable function due to his liberalism that was at the heart of his political perspective. This liberal attitude generated a scientific and political discussion not again equaled until after the fall of fascism. From 1927 to 1935, Italy saw the flourishing of a movement of thought to which both the old and new generations contributed with an enthusiasm and diligence that until now has no equivalent. Many men of thought and action who, even today, hold positions of great responsibility in the government and cultural life of the country emerged from the University of Pisa. All this is the result of the work of Giuseppe Bottai. We can and must recognize his limits and the reasons for the illusions and delusions that he generated; however, beyond the negative dimension, it is necessary to point out the inspiration his liberalism generated.

Eleven

PALMIRO TOGLIATTI

The Communist Party never took a clear position regarding my ideas overall, much less my ideas on communism. My brand of corporativism that I elaborated upon from the Congress of Ferrara (1932) onward, created a state of confusion within the party from which it has yet to free itself.

Antonio Gramsci's extensive critique of my theory, included in the new edition of *Quaderni del carcere* [*Prison Notebooks*], was the first manifestation of this confusion. In addition to his negative critique, however, there was also some constructive criticism. I did not challenge this critique when it came out, simply because I came to know of it much too late; and, I will not challenge it today because times have completely changed. I will, however, challenge the critique leveled against me by Palmiro Togliatti, who violently opposed my book *La filosofia del comunismo* [*The Philosophy of Communism*, 1948].

Togliatti has yet to be historically defined as a political figure, because he appeared on the scene at the time fascism was dying and problematicism was emerging, and, as in all moments of transition between two different eras, he was influenced by both. However, Togliatti was unable to move beyond the two eras in order to move forward. He stopped halfway and sank into an ambiguity that characterizes his position. If we want to define this ambiguity, we can call it the ambiguity of success, of compromise, of cynicism. Togliatti's position represents the maximum renunciation of superior ideals and principles. Every means becomes good. Nothing is useful unless it serves some purpose.

With his cynical logic, Togliatti situated himself between fascism and antifascism and defined Italian history in the second half of this century. Togliatti was partially the craftsman of postfascism and, therefore, the protagonist of our present history. To understand the events taking place in Italy, Togliatti's program and its realization through the years must first be understood. However, the terms used to determine Togliatti's position cannot be readily recognized. He was a communist and anticommunist, a fascist and antifascist, a Catholic and an anti-Catholic, a bourgeois and an antibourgeois, a democrat and an antidemocrat. He was everything, and he was nothing. He was a winner, but because he remained on the outside of the political parties, he disappointed everyone. Togliatti tried everything without compromising himself. It was impossible to accept any of his conclusions because none of them contained any absolute truth.

How did Togliatti continue to win throughout the twentieth century? His ability to promote his fundamental political principles was indisputable. He did not waste time reconciling different demands. Instead, he concentrated totally on defending a specific course of action, taking control of Italy by uniting fascism and antifascism by creating a single

undifferentiated goal. Fascism had to continue. To achieve this it was necessary to come to terms with the Church. Among the compromises, the historical compromise had to become a priority. Togliatti was the true author of this compromise. Since 1947 it has inspired Italian politics in all its manifestations. While we can discuss the reality of this situation, this reality clearly does not look to the future; it merely represents the past and the present.

Post-World War II Italian history followed the course forged by Togliatti. He knew the course he would pursue from the beginning, and the Communist Party followed it without hesitation. Giovanni Berlinguer also followed Togliatti. He may have felt and thought differently than Togliatti; however, his logic was the same and had to be followed to reach the predetermined goal.

How was the historical compromise born? It is easy to pinpoint the underlying premises. The problem goes back to the Vatican Agreements, and can only be understood by interpreting these Agreements from two different historical perspectives. The Vatican Agreements emerged twice, in 1929 and in 1947, with quite different meanings.

In 1929, the Vatican Agreements were established for more or less practical reasons. From a philosophical point of view, the neoidealistic position was clear. Giovanni Gentile and Benedetto Croce could not approve the Agreements, since they opposed the secular Italian philosophical tradition. From a political point of view, Benito Mussolini wanted a success that would have both national and international ramifications and was not afraid to overcome any resistance. The Agreements were approved and Mussolini was deceived by their success.

Despite the Vatican Agreements, everything continued as before. Fascism did not change its philosophy. When the entry on fascism was finally included in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*] three years later, it did not even hint at the Vatican Agreements. The concept of State continued to be the one eschewed by idealism. The Vatican Agreements did not yet have the power to affect the Italian consciousness and reactions against Church's official positions were not lacking. The problem simply remained marginal and did not affect the philosophical tenets upon which the State was built.

Instead, a completely different situation emerged from the work of the Constitutional Assembly (1946–1948), relegating the Church to a secondary role, while the State's role emerged as one of primary importance. Under the new constitution, would the Italian republic be a secular or a confessional state? Togliatti's response was clear and without reservation. The Vatican Agreements were to be included in their original form when signed by Cardinal Pietro Gasparri and Mussolini.

What was the essence of the Vatican Agreements? Article 1 coincided with the Statute of 1848, declaring Catholicism the religion of the State. Article 36 of the Vatican Agreements established the Catholic religion as

the foundation of public instruction. Did this mean Italy was now a secular or a confessional State? Although a conflict with Article 3 of the same Constitution was now evident, the Assembly agreed to abide by the declaration of the Statute without much protest. The real Vatican Agreements came into being to strengthen the historical compromise left as a legacy by Togliatti. The Constitution just gave it official approval.

Was it a fascist or an antifascist Constitution? Even though Togliatti never expressed his point of view on the issue, the Constitution was nothing if not profoundly fascist. Togliatti was the true author of the last fascist contribution to the Constitution. Once this course was set, the ambiguity could only increase, as confirmed by our history from 1947 to the present time.

Consequently, all the years of criticism and demonstrations against the continuation of fascist laws from that year forward have amounted to nothing. The constitutional judges, and above all the Presidents of the courts, were not affected by the protests. The atmosphere ushered in by Togliatti continues to prevail, passively and hypocritically. Everything remains the same. Everyone says "yes" even if their "yes" is the perfect equivalent of their "no." The historical compromise has been alive since 1947, underwritten by the Vatican. A term has been created that means yes and no at the same time: *abstention*. Everyone abstains and the process moves forward.

The Christian Democrats, however, do not abstain. They say they want a single-party government, and once again they win with the tacit approval of the Communist Party. Togliatti's cynicism is out in the open, and no force is strong enough to resist it. The Vatican Agreements have become the typical expression of how the ambiguity of the communists and the ambiguity of the Christian Democrats can coexist and dominate.

Togliatti's political practices have become consolidated in the political process in such a way that no change can be made. He understood this and acted accordingly. Now, in 1976, it seems impossible for the country to move ahead. Certainly, to speak of communism or of Catholicism is no longer viable. The terms are now confused and there is no way we can distinguish between fascism and antifascism; even if distinguishing between the two is no longer the problem and is of no concern to anyone. The question has moved to a different level where faith does not exist and those in power want only to rule.

What does political power mean? Catholicism and communism, the two greatest ideological forces in the world, are pitted against each other. Togliatti may have manipulated them to gain both his own acceptance and that of his Party. He may have gambled, and he may have won. But now? What remains of the great battle, and how can it continue? Now that all the great problems have reached their culmination, no one can find a solution. It is possible to believe that everyone will continue to live in a world of lies without any ideals to pursue, just as it is possible to believe that Togliatti's cynicism represents a political expression beyond which a person cannot go.

So-called politics has reached a pathological state, and is ending in failure. Togliatti, after representing the vanguard of failure, left us only the legacy of a negation that cannot be overcome. He was the embodiment of an extraordinary phenomenon beyond which no hope exists.

The concept of cynicism, through which I have tried to qualify both Togliatti's personality and his communism, is not a concept that can be linked to Togliatti's political conduct alone. The politics of the entire world have become cynical. Lying has become acceptable. I want to refer to a case of this cynicism that specifically affects me. My brand of communism and Togliatti's brand came face to face as we tried to persuade the youth to participate in the leftist ideological debate.

As far as I am concerned, I tried to reveal my thought in my book *La filosofia del comunismo*, published in 1948. Togliatti commented upon it in these terms:

> The fourth of the articles contained in this little volume can be read with a certain interest. Herein, it is stated that Giovanni Gentile's judgment of Karl Marx's doctrine (resulting from the now notorious essays published before 1900 and again in 1937) was not, and could not be seen as negatively as is generally thought. Indeed, the founder of Italian actual idealism could not miss the fact that Ludwig Feuerbach's thesis was based on a conception of reality understood as creation, a convergence of knowledge and action, a premise that Gentile's Absolute Actual Idealism could not reject. Spirito, however, could not understand that reality, as interpreted by Marxism, is the living and concrete reality of history. Instead, to the actual idealist, who sways in another direction not being capable of understanding how a dialectic movement can exist outside the logic of thought, everything is reduced to a dry and empty game, completely detached from reality. For this reason, the communism or philo-communism of Gentile's followers (aside from their judgment of the political value that this tendency may have had during fascism) has always appeared to us as nothing but an abstract utopia. To prove this statement, we must read the first of these writings by Ugo Spirito, where, according to the logic of actual idealism (although I am not sure whether he is being serious, malicious, or satyrical), he reduces, deduces, and systematizes all the false judgments of today's most vicious and stupid anticommunism, from the dictatorship of the proletariat to the Machiavellianism, which allows the dictator to govern the passive masses. The result has been a monstrous and ridiculous libel, worthy at most of a Civic Committee or of a Father Riccardo Lombardi. Was this libel written by Ugo Spirito, or was it solicited from him as a marginal contribution to the rebirth of the anticommunist bestialities of the fascist era, paid for with Jesuit dollars? Everything is possible. It is impossible, however, to understand something of our thought and of the reality of our movement from one

who has not been able to make the leap from pre-Marxist and non-Marxist thought to the only conception of the world that has a leg to stand on since it sees the historical movement and, therefore, reality, as they really are (and not as they are depicted by the Civic Committee or in the articles of the journal *Civiltà Cattolica*) and looks for and finds the conditions and the forms for our development, for our victorious advance, for our sincere realization. Certainly, informing oneself, and gathering concrete data about a socialist democracy and about those democracies that have taken the path of socialism is more difficult than fabricating false data and telling lies, according to Gentile's logic. However, it is also the only way to give the impression of a serious person and not that of a squalid con artist.[1]

P. T.

Giorgio Fano responded to this comment by Togliatti in the April–May 1948 issue of the journal *Rinascita*:

Palmiro Togliatti's review of Ugo Spirito's *Filosofia del comunismo* [*Philosophy of Communism*] appears in this issue. Many of us who disagree somewhat with the ideas of the author of the review will nonetheless read it thinking we might find a useful philosophical and scientific discussion. This is a petty bourgeois illusion! Togliatti resorts to a brusque and dynamic method that consists of accusing others of being pigs and scoundrels who have sold out to the adversary. He calls Ugo Spirito's book a monstrous and ridiculous libel, worthy at most of a Civic Committee or of Father Lombardi. He insinuates at the end of the review that the book is a "marginal contribution to the rebirth of the anticommunist bestialities of the fascist era" paid for with Jesuit dollars. Is it possible that Congressman Togliatti may have been so unintelligent as to not have understood anything of Ugo Spirito's sincere, reasonable, and meditated philo-communism? The truth is something else. Togliatti is a very intelligent man, but uses his intelligence as a weapon and not as a means to further an understanding of the issues. He knows quite well that Ugo Spirito is one of the few Italian scholars who has truly lived the communist ideals, and as a result of this idealism, Spirito is uncomfortable with the politics of Stalin (who has raised the aspirations of primitive communism to the same level as the one reached by Pope Alexander VI with respect to Christian aspirations). Togliatti also knows that for this reason, Ugo Spirito's writings are taking hold on some young communists; thus, it is necessary to fight him. Maybe Togliatti would have been more artful if he had not used such excessive language. His language leads us to take too seriously those "ludi cartacei" [verbal games] that men of the profession make an ostentation of despising.[2]

Fano's comments went right to the point. However, any discourse must include all of Togliatti's *method*. In reality, Togliatti did not believe in anything. For him, the historical compromise was not founded upon any ideal. When Communists and Democrats want to form a coalition to share political power, it is not a coalition of two political forces characterized by equal spiritual values, but only a calculated move aimed at reaching a majority capable of governing. In reality, Togliatti was against Catholicism, which he railed against constantly by condemning the Church and its institutions. He was not only speaking against me, but also against the Jesuits and Father Lombardi, against *Civiltà Cattolica*, against the Civic Committees, and so forth. He supported the historical compromise, as well as the denigration of the Church and its institutions.

The same thing can be said for the present-day politics of the Communist Party, striving for an agreement between the Church, the Christian Democrats, communism, the Vatican, and all the organizations on both sides, while continuously scorning, for example, the Christian-Democratic Party, which it holds responsible for the ill-governed state of the last thirty years. No superior ideal is invoked as a foundation on which to proceed, and the two terms of the historical compromise are considered merely as extrinsic forces to be adopted to reach a goal of a political nature. No sign exists that any of these entities have anything in common; thus, the discourse is lacking a unified revolutionary motive. After all, the communists are alien to the Catholic world, and the Catholics are alien to the communist world. Rather than loving each other, they hate, fear, and despise each other. They do not know how to overcome the mentality of sheer political calculation, so they continue to mistrust each other.

The historical compromise has been practiced, more or less, since 1948; its realization does not have, and cannot have, any value from the perspective of the great historical achievements. The historical compromise does not offer a profound meaning assuring a permanent union, even though it is held together by a desire to reach a temporary short-term solution. Naturally, if we make a judgment about what is taking place in this atmosphere, we can do it only from a detached and indifferent state of mind. This detachment and indifference paves the way for the emergence of a deep-seated insensitivity to anything that has any historical meaning or value. Today, both the communist and the Catholic press interpret a superficial reality that is unable to reach minds and hearts. The first manifestion is found in that both use the same vulgar and superficial style in political discourse.

Togliatti was the first to utilize this practice. If we were to reread his comments about my book, we cannot help but noticing, above all, that it has been poorly written. The aesthetic aspect is the immediate revelation of the most profound essence of reality. If, therefore, we truly want to understand the historical compromise and what it will become, the first step is to check its language. It is the language of emptiness, it is based on nothingness, and finds its moral equivalent in cynicism.

Twelve

PAUL VI

Cardinal G. B. Montini, Archbishop of Milan, referred to my work at the opening ceremonies of the Twenty-fifth Congress of Catholic University Students on 1 September 1959. He had a substantial philosophical background, and in his speech he dealt with the relationship between science and philosophy using a pessimistic tone. In particular, he expressed his concern about the spread of atheism as he tried to warn the youth about idealism and problematicism.

Regarding problematicism, he said:

> Next to the testimonies about life we can add a new one on the collapse of ideological systems, specifically the collapse of idealism, the most highly acclaimed philosophy. Its collapse was caused by and is carried to extreme ends by Ugo Spirito, an illustrious disciple of that philosophy, a philosophy with famous followers in the clashing political fields of fascism and liberalism. Speaking of Ugo Spirito, Prof. Marino Gentile from the University of Padua, said: "I remember the sympathy with which many people looked at the accentuation of the problematic aspect of philosophy that, in the philosophy of Ugo Spirito, took the name of problematicism. I also remember the historical reasons explaining this sympathy. Spirito, a follower of Giovanni Gentile's philosophy, indicated that the most urgent task of philosophy was to redefine Gentile's philosophy. Thus, he challenged idealism and the entire field of modern philosophy. This speculative attitude was regarded with particular sympathy by those who wanted to break down the prejudice that prevented the widespread acceptance of a genuine spiritual and transcendental philosophy both inside and outside of Italy.... What has remained of the sympathy for problematicism? We can only state that such a moment in Italian philosophy is gone. It is gone because no matter how great the hopes were, it is clear that Ugo Spirito has not gone beyond a situational problematicism as he defined his own philosophy.... Problematicism...does not lend itself to new horizons, but is a rigorous and squalid antimetaphysical attitude."[1] Problematicism, then, cannot enlarge its field of investigation. On the contrary, it represents a closed mental attitude. And with this loss of certainty, atheism finds fertile ground. Immanence remains the refuge of thought and the exaltation of humanism replaces God. This humanism, marked by the negation of God, cannot help but lead to the terrible alternatives of political absolutism on the one hand, and of moral skepticism, on the other.

This was Cardinal Montini's harsh opinion of me in 1959. Today, he would see that problematicism has come a long way since then and the

sympathy it generated has become even more profound. Cardinal Montini subsequently became Pope and was distracted by his many duties. I would not have had the opportunity to address him had it not been for an unforseen event.

On 12 December 1967, Father Vincenzo Miano, Secretary of the Office for Non-Believers, sent me the following letter:

> Dear Sir:
>
> You may be surprised to receive this personal appeal from His Holiness, Pope Paul VI. It is not, indeed, a common practice of the Catholic Church to address those who do not recognize its mission. However, the Catholic Church recognizes that it not only has a message to send to the world, but also to those who do not recognize the religious dimension in history and human life. The Church is aware of the necessity for collaboration among all men on many problematic issues, especially peace, regardless of their ideological faith. Therefore, it is on the level of brotherly collaboration that this document from the Pope is addressed to you. We strongly feel that if faith in God keeps us separated, our common interest in humanity unites us. We hope you read this appeal in this spirit of unity.
>
> Respectfully yours, Father Vincenzo Miano, Secretary.

This letter accompanied the "Message of His Holiness Paul VI for the Celebration of a Day of Peace." The message, written on parchment, began with these words: "We address all men of goodwill to celebrate 'A day of Peace' throughout the world on the first day of the year, 1 January 1968. We hope this celebration will become an annual event to show our desire for peace and as a promise to work for it." The message ended with this invitation:

> We invite all wise and strong men to dedicate this Day to true peace to sincerely recognize and respect the human rights and the independence of all Nations. The celebration of the ideal of peace must not favor the indolence of those who fear sacrificing their life for their Country and brothers, when the latter are defending justice and freedom, but rather seek to escape the responsibilities and the necessary risks needed to accomplish great duties and generous deeds. Peace is not pacifism. It does not promote a vile, cowardly, and lazy conception of life, but instead proclaims the highest universal values of life, truth, justice, freedom, and love. We must safeguard these values, placing them under the banner of peace. For this reason, we invite men and Nations to lift their banner at the dawn of the new year, so the ark of civilization may be guided through the inevitable rough waters of history until it reaches its highest goals.

I answered the Pope's message, addressing my letter to the Deputy Secretary of State:

> I have received the Pope's message regarding the Day of Peace sent to me by the Office for Non-Believers with a letter from Father Miano. I am not responding directly to Father Miano, since I wish to address the Church as a whole. I would like to discuss several points. The first concerns the fact that the Pope's message was sent to me as non-believer in the category of those who do not recognize the religious dimension of existence and history. I have no reason to argue against this definition, but I would like to know precisely who formulated it and how it was formulated. Obviously, this judgment concerns my work, or better, some of my works, which were never placed on the *Index*. However, I believe that transferring judgment from an author's works to the person of the author is a leap that cannot be easily justified. On the other hand, the sending of this message, probably not limited to me, but extended to a significant number of individuals considered to be non-believers, implies the existence of a file of non-believers arbitrarily compiled. It is true that Father Miano's letter defines the Pope's message as personal. However, I am not able to discern—but would like to know—if the qualification of "non-believer" came directly from the Pope. A second explanation, indispensable if I am to respond to the Pope's appeal, regards the next to the last paragraph of his message, addressing the duty of fighting for justice and freedom and declaring those who abstain from fighting as "vile." The message reads: "Finally, it is desirable that the exaltation of the ideal of Peace must not favor the indolence of those who fear sacrificing their own lives for their Country and brothers, while the others are defending justice and freedom." This clarification concerns the meaning given to the fight for justice and freedom, and to the solidarity that must be demonstrated in the process. Every Country at war proclaims it is fighting for the same ideals, so both the Vietnamese and the Americans believe they are defending the right to freedom. An individual then must know if each person's duty is to fight for his own Country, independent of judgment of the cause he defends, or if duty presupposes an approval of the war being fought. In the former case, is the judge of the ideal the single soldier or the government of the country? Of all people, we Italians have had to face the difficult choice of what side to fight for and to whom to pledge our solidarity. How then could we judge duty and cowardice? On the other hand, he who refuses to fight exposes himself to possible grave risks and cannot avoid the accusation of cowardice. Therefore, it seems that the distinction between peace and pacifism appearing in the Popes's message can only imply one thing, that is, to invite everyone to participate if war breaks out. Under such conditions, I cannot comprehend the true

meaning and the goal proposed by the Pope. I do not see how an obligation to fight can be reconciled with a collective wish for peace. Therefore, the celebration you want to hold on 1 January runs the risk of becoming mere rhetoric. As long as definitions of "justice and freedom" continue to be so unclear as to not allow a precise choice and a clear allegiance, every appeal for peace is merely rhetorical. These are the two explanations I need in order to respond in an informed manner to the Pope's message.

Best wishes, Ugo Spirito.

The explanations I asked for were not immediately forthcoming. However, on 14 February 1968, I received the following reply from Monsignor Giovanni Benelli, member of the Secretary of State of His Holiness:

Most Illustrious Professor:

I owe my sincerest apology for the delay in answering your letter dated 28 December in which you ask me for an explanation regarding the manner in which you received our Holy Father's recent message for the celebration of World Peace Day. I fully understand the sense of surprise and displeasure you felt when you received that venerable document and the attached letter by the Office for Non-Believers; so much so that you reexamined—if you will allow the expression—your conscience with regards to your work as a thinker and a scholar, and you recognized the need to clarify that only some of your books, as stated in your letter, can be singled out for their denial of the religious dimension in history and human existence. Accordingly, I share your assertion regarding the overall merit of your works, which only a philosopher is qualified to judge even to the extent that the attribution of "non-believer" would entail, in your case, an unjustifiable leap. On the other hand, I can tell you that the Vatican Office in question, wishing to convey the Pope's message to the widest possible audience, based the decision on a criterion commonly followed and that, even in a matter as delicate as this, I believe acceptable; that is to say that the published works of authors (or parts thereof) when they remain unrevised, are to be regarded as being reflective of their thoughts. I thank you for offering me the chance to respond. Please accept my apology if the manner followed by the Secretary of State has caused you any displeasure. However, I can assure you that the supposed file to which you alluded, in addition to being arbitrary—as you correctly state—would not conform to the spirit of the Gospel, a spirit of simplicity, understanding, mildness, and open and trusting dialogue with all men of goodwill, and does not exist at all, neither in this office nor in any other place. Under these circumstances, the reason behind the gesture which has upset you so much becomes clear: the Pope

wants to invite not only religious leaders and civil authorities, but also the most prominent exponents of cultural and intellectual life, such as yourself, regardless of ideological convictions, to reflect on world peace, since he is certain that the consensus created as a result of such an important cause would not be overlooked. I want to assure you of one more thing: the qualification worrying you to such a point that you remembered your works were never placed in the *Index* (and you did so with such feeling today it honors you much more than it honors other thinkers and literati who boasted the same treatment), did not come from the Holy Father, who holds you in great esteem, loves you, prays for you, and invokes every heavenly consolation for you. As far as the second explanation is concerned, you can draw from the examination of the Message of Peace, as well as from various pontifical documents on social and international life, the true meaning of the expression about which you inquired. Allow me to tell you the Message was sent not for mere rhetoric, but to make men more aware—even through the repeated celebration of a "Day of Peace." Peace is a precious grace bestowed upon us by God and should be preserved at all costs, both by eliminating anything causing hostility in private relationships and by supporting in the international arena, the certainty that with just and sincere dealings and without the use of force, the conflict among nations can be resolved. With sincere devotion I remain yours truly.

Giovanni Benelli, Undersecretary.

In the light of the Vatican Office for Non-Believers, the exchange of these letters carries exceptional significance that must be underlined. The fact I did not respond to Monsignor Benelli does not at all show disregard for his statements. It is instead the consequence of a *surprise* going far beyond any of my expectations.

Why did Monsignor Benelli not respond to my explicit and fundamental questions? I posed questions involving the entire Catholic Church, and in particular its message for peace. Could the Catholic Church hope to hide or close itself off in silence? Yet it did so, and in an unlikely manner. A few observations will be enough to highlight the seriousness of the situation.

As far as my request for the first explanation is concerned, the question is relatively secondary. It involves the usual technique of saying and not saying that accompanies every so-called political response.

I found a large envelope with the seal "Segretariato per i non credenti" [Office for Non-Believers] addressed to Ugo Spirito in my mailbox. One could no longer doubt my designation as a non-believer. The Church, with all the authority of its official organism, confirmed it.

I asked myself: How do they know? Do they have a file on non-believers? Do they have a method to discriminate among people by dividing them into two categories? My questions were precise and called for precise

answers. The answer was the following: "However, I can assure you that the supposed file to which you alluded, in addtion to being arbitrary—as you correctly state—would not conform to the spirit of the Gospel, a spirit of simplicity, understanding, mildness, and open and trusting dialogue with all men of goodwill, and does not exist at all, neither in this office nor in any other place."

The answer to my first question was peremptory, as you can see. We have absolutely no file. Then what exists? To whom was the letter sent? I repeat, the problem of the first explanation is relatively secondary. What truly matters is the answer to the second question concerning the Message of Peace.

This second question touches upon a problem regarding the entire Church, because it involves an initiative of international scope: the annual celebration of a "Day of Peace" not carried out through "speeches of mere rhetoric," "but to render people more aware that peace is a precious grace."

From these words of Monsignor Benelli we gather that the "Day of Peace" can be viewed as a rhetorical initiative, but the question is much bigger than that. The Pope's message directly specifies the task of the believer in the defense of peace. Here the Pope explains peace is not pacifism, stating an individual must not accept a vile and lazy conception of life because he must defend the highest and most universal values of truth, justice, freedom, and love.

To not be a coward, a person must fight for truth, for justice, for freedom, and for love. However, he needs to distinguish between a just and an unjust cause. Who preaches the goodness of the cause for which to fight? Does it concern an individual or a collective judgment? Is it a judgment of a nation or of a group? Is it a judgment of political authority or a religious institution? Is the Pope the one who must bless the war?

Evidently this is the dilemma the Church has struggled with for two thousand years. The answer was not formulated upon a sure principle.

Here the Pope takes the huge task of proclaiming the decisive word upon himself. He is not afraid to invite people to fight for peace. For him, pacifism is an expression of cowardliness and an expression of the absence of solidarity. One needs to take up arms and defend the superior goals in a concrete manner. The problem becomes clear in that it is the equivalent of a standard of conduct that has to be adopted.

The question I proposed to Monsignor Benelli arises exactly at this point. How does a person decide where truth, justice, freedom, and love reside? When must the believer take up arms?

My question was not a new one, as it has consistently been repeated through the centuries. Am I the one who must decide, or must an *authority* be the one to decide? What if more than two conflicting authorities exist?

Now, the Pope intervenes and says: "We want peace and not pacifism." By saying this, he does not answer the essential question and he does not offer any other guidance. The importance of the issue rests in fighting,

moved by the need for solidarity.

The Pope's message ends without any indication as to what the believer should do to become further involved. In my opinion, this conclusion turns the "Day of Peace" into a completely rhetorical event. The questions I addressed to Monsignor Benelli arose from these convictions. The message, I told him, does not strike a chord in me. For this reason, I turn to you for further clarification.

Monsignor Benelli gave me an answer whose only meaning was to confirm the rhetorical character of the day. It is not rhetoric, he concludes, because its goal is that of "rendering men more aware that peace is a precious gift" both in private relationships and in the international arena. Was the Day of Peace then a day of educational propaganda for a supreme ideal? As far as I was concerned, Monsignor Benelli's answers were as vague as the Pope's message.

Leaving aside the rhetoric of the message, what in fact was the Pope's [and Monsignor Benelli's] intention for the message of peace? Why was the new message conceived and spread throughout the world? Certainly, the rhetorical and didactic function can justify the event, but cannot explain it fully or satisfactorily. Above all, it cannot explain why the message concludes with the contrast of peace versus pacifism. We have to fight, and not be cowards. Nothing else can be found in this message. However, this interpretation cannot remain in its generic form without clarifying the part that talks about justice and love. It is true the message is stated in theoretical terms, but it is also true it identifies the enemy in no uncertain terms. Is it perhaps *communism* and its sphere of influence? The world is divided into two parts, and the good must fight against the evil. The choice involves world justice, and the only thing left to do is to carry it out. Either this is the meaning of the message or the message has no meaning at all. I cannot get a different answer from the Pope or from Monsignor Benelli. The call to arms is conceivable only if we have a precise idea of the enemy we face. Which side plays the part of the unjust? The message defines the players in abstract terms that can be applied to anything. It is clear, however, to fight the enemy we must identify it. The message for peace, excluding the part that is not rhetorical, is a call to arms against a precise enemy.

For these reasons, Monsignor Benelli could not answer my two questions. His answer revealed all the courtesy and the goodwill of the personal relationship, but he could not go beyond that. He could not delve into the answers because the questions were bigger than the contingent facts.

The exemplification of the above mentioned contrasts between the Pope and myself is useful to the extent we view these contrasts as expressions of a much more serious issue. As far as I am concerned, the discussion between the Pope and myself has no other value than to show the impossibility of effective contact and collaboration between these two opposing world-views. The two world-views have progressively lost the ability to carry on a meaningful dialogue.

NOTES

Editor's Introduction

1. Ugo Spirito, "Se sono una persona intelligente, è solo per caso" ["If I Am an Intelligent Person, It Is Only by Chance"], *Il Tempo* (26 June 1981), p. 70

2. Emanuele Severino, "Attualismo e problematicismo" ["Actual Idealism and Problematicism"], in *Il pensiero di Ugo Spirito* [*The Thought of Ugo Spirito*] (Città di Castello: Treccani, 1988), p. 29.

3. Ugo Spirito, *La vita come ricerca* [*Life as a Search*] (Florence: Sansoni, 1937), p. 175. See also, Giovanni Gentile, "Lettera a Ugo Spirito," ["Letter to Ugo Spirito,"] *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 6 (1938), pp. 240–241.

4. Ugo Spirito, *La vita come amore* [*Life as Love*] (Florence: Sansoni, 1937), p. 310.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

6. Ugo Spirito, *Dall'attualismo al problematicismo* [*From Actual Idealism to Problematicism*] (Florence: Sansoni, 1976), p. 43.

7. Ugo Spirito, *Inizio di una nuova epoca* [*Beginning of a New Era*] (Florence: Sansoni, 1961), p. 268.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 278.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 285–286.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 135–136.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 139–140.

19. Ugo Spirito, *Storia della mia ricerca* [*History of My Search*] (Florence: Sansoni, 1971), p. 36.

20. Antonio Russo, *Positivismo e attualismo in Ugo Spirito* [*Positivism and Actual Idealism in Ugo Spirito*] (Rome: Fondazione Ugo Spirito, 1990), p. 125.

21. Spirito, *Storia della mia ricerca*, p. 51.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

23. Russo, *Positivismo e attualismo in Ugo Spirito*, p. 126.

24. Ugo Spirito, *Dal mito alla scienza* [*From Myth to Science*] (Florence: Sansoni, 1966), p. 29.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

27. Spirito, *Storia della mia ricerca*, p. 122.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 125 and 128.
32. Spirito, *Dall'attualismo al problematicismo*, p. 50.
33. Spirito, *Storia della mia ricerca*, p. 71.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
37. Spirito, *Dall'attualismo al problematicismo*, p. 53.
38. Spirito, *Storia della mia ricerca*, p. 201.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
40. Ugo Spirito, *Memorie di un incosciente* [*Memoirs of the Twentieth Century*] (Milan: Rusconi, 1977), p. 24.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Chapter Two

1. Mario Praz, *La casa della vita* [*The House of Life*] (Milan: Mondadori, 1958).

Chapter Three

1. As far as Umberto Ricci's removal from teaching and his exile to Alexandria in Egypt, Ernesto Rossi, in his book, *I padroni del vapore* [*The Owners of the Steam*], stated the action was taken under my instigation. This statement was openly false, Carlo Antoni, informed of the facts, convinced Rossi that he had made a mistake. Rossi promised to rectify the mistake in the following edition of the book. Everyone is dead now, so I am only left with the occasion of revealing these memoirs, which no one can evidently doubt. However, one can always read the original text.

2. Giovanni Gentile, "Proemio" ["Introduction"], *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 1 (1919), pp. 2–3.

Chapter Seven

1. I devoted my attention to Giovanni Gentile since January 1918. I have meditated and written on his work from that time until now. The main stages of my study are represented by the following volumes: *La vita come ricerca* [*Life as a Search*] (1937); *Giovanni Gentile* (1969); *Storia della mia ricerca* [*History of My Search*] (1974); and *Dall'attualismo al problematicismo* [*From Actual Idealism to Problematicism*] (1976). This chapter is based on a speech I gave in May 1975 on the occasion of "Gentile's week" at the Institute of the Italian Encyclopedia to honor the centenary of his birth. The title of my speech was "Il Gentile romano" ["The Roman Gentile"] and the speech reveals my most personal relationship with my teacher.

2. Giovanni Gentile, "Proemio" ["Introduction"], *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 1 (1919), pp. 2–3.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

4. Benedetto Croce, *Lettere a Giovanni Gentile* [*Letters to Giovanni Gentile*] (Milan: Mondadori, 1981), p. 589.

5. Gentile, "Proemio," pp. 2–3.

6. Giovanni Gentile, *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*] (Rome: Istituto Enciclopedico Treccani, 1929–1939), p. xi.

7. *Ibid.*, p. xii.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. Giovanni Gentile, "Concetto della natura nel moderno idealismo" ["Concept of Nature in Modern Idealism"] partially reprinted in Gentile's *Opere filosofiche* [*Philosophical Works*], ed. Eugenio Garin (Milan: Garzanti, 1991), p. 833.

11. Giovanni Gentile, "Filosofia e scienza" ["Philosophy and Science"], *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 2 (1931), pp. 81–92.

12. To read review see Delio Cantimori, "La vita come ricerca" ["Life as a Search"], *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 5 (1937), p. 356.

13. Ugo Spirito, "Lettera a Giovanni Gentile" ["Letter to Giovanni Gentile"], *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 5 (1938), pp. 147–148.

14. Giovanni Gentile, "Lettera a Ugo Spirito" ["Letter to Ugo Spirito"], *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 6 (1938), p. 356.

15. Ugo Spirito, "Il cammino del problematicismo" ["The Journey of Problematicism"], *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 1 (1975), pp. 1–74.

16. Ugo Spirito, *La vita come ricerca* [*Life as a Search*] (Florence: Sansoni, 1937), pp. 75–77.

17. Giovanni Gentile, *Struttura e genesi della società* [*Genesis and Structure of Society*] (Florence: Sansoni, 1946), p. 111.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 111–112.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

20. Giovanni Gentile, "Individuo e stato" ["Individual and State"], *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 6 (1932), pp. 313–315.

21. Gentile, "Avvertenza," ["Foreword,"] *Struttura e genesi della società.*

Chapter Eight

1. Croce says, "Spirito's article 'Troppa filosofia?' ['Too Much Philosophy?'], published in *L'Educazione Nazionale*, March 1923, pp. 1–3, refers to my marginal notes, 'Troppa filosofia,'" *La Critica*, 21 (1923), pp. 61–64.

2. The journal *La nuova politica liberale* was founded in 1922 by Gentile with his disciples. Later it was called *Educazione politica*; subsequently, it was renamed *Educazione fascista*, and finally, *Civiltà fascista*.

3. Benedetto Croce, *Storia del regno di Napoli* [*History of the Kingdom of Naples*] (Bari: Laterza, 1925).

4. Benedetto Croce, *Lettere a Giovanni Gentile* [*Letters to Giovanni Gentile*] (Milan: Mondadori, 1981), p. 589.

5. Benedetto Croce, "Lettera aperta a Benedetto Croce" ["Open Letter to Benedetto Croce"], *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 1 (1950), p. 1.

6. Manlio Ciardo, *Un fallito tentativo della riforma dello hegelismo. L'idealismo attuale* [*A Failed Attempt to Reform Hegelianism: Actual Idealism*] (Bari: Laterza, 1948), p. vii.

7. Giovanni Gentile, *Saggi critici* [*Critical Essays*] (Florence: Vallecchi, 1927), pp. 11–35.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

9. Benedetto Croce, *Problemi di estetica* [*Problems of Aesthetics*] (Bari: Laterza, 1910), p. 339.

10. *Ibid.* Originally, in Giovanni Gentile, "Il concetto della storia" ["The Concept of History"], *Studi storici*, ed. Amedeo Crivellucci, 8 (1899), pp. 169–201.

11. Giovanni Gentile, *Frammenti di estetica e letteratura* [*Fragments of Aesthetics and Literature*] (Lanciano: Carabba, 1920), p. 140.

12. Benedetto Croce, *Contributo alla critica di me stesso* [*Contribution to the Critique of Myself*] (Bari: Laterza, 1926), p. 58; reprint. in *Etica e politica* [*Ethics and Politics*] (Bari: Laterza, 1931), p. 399.

13. Benedetto Croce, *Materialismo storico e economia marxista* [*Historical Materialism and Marxist Economics*] (Bari: Laterza, 1899), p. xii.

14. Benedetto Croce, "L'ortodossia hegeliana del Marx" ["The Hegelian Orthodoxy in Marx"], *Quaderni della critica* (July 1947), p. 8.

15. Croce, *Contributo alla critica di me stesso*, pp. 57–58; reprinted in *Etica e politica*, p. 398.

16. Benedetto Croce, *Logica* [*Logic*] (Bari: Laterza, 3rd ed., 1917), p. 221.

17. It is almost inconceivable that Croce claims to have broadened the relationship between philosophy and the history of philosophy at the same moment he quotes from Gentile's writing, the originator of this theory. Such strangeness has been made clear to me by Professor Francesco Modica who compared Croce's second edition with the third edition of *Logica* [*Logic*], (Bari: Laterza, 1909), p. 227. He realized the following sentence: "To have broadened the relationship between philosophy and the history of philosophy" is missing in the third edition. Preparing the third edition over many years, Croce forgot that he was quoting from Gentile's writing and claimed ownership of the idea.

18. Benedetto Croce, *Conversazioni critiche* [*Critical Conversations*] (Bari: Laterza, 2nd ed., 1918), pp. 67–68.

Chapter Nine

1. As far as Berto Ricci is concerned, see chap. 3, note 1.

2. As I wrote the letter, I remember having doubts about my addressing Mussolini as "Excellency." I had never used the title "Duce" in speaking or writing—and now it seemed rhetorical and servile to use it on this occasion. I do not know enough about Mussolini's state of mind to know whether my avoidance of the title of "Duce" perturbed him. I still have my doubts today. However, I am inclined to believe that he could have been somewhat irritated on that occasion. In other telegrams I had received, he had been introduced as "Head of the Government." This time he was "Il Duce."

3. I did not pay attention to Mussolini for many years. In Sergio Zavoli's *Nascita di una dittatura* [*Birth of a Dictatorship*] (Turin: SEI, 1973), I answered the following questions on television:

(1) In response to the question: "Was Mussolini influenced by different and diverse men and ideas and was able to reach an organic synthesis?" I said:

> I believe Mussolini's synthesis was never truly organic. That is, Mussolini's ambiguity was the result of his suggestibility. By paying attention to so many different voices, he ended up being influenced by contrasting suggestions, and, consequently, he was not able to reach a decisive conclusion. In his political life, Mussolini achieved a degree of historical success. Above all, this success was the result of an *ideal ambiguity*, a constant shifting between the socialist demand and the reactionary and conservative demand. Mussolini tried to satisfy both demands but was unable to reach a happy medium. To conclude, this ideal weakness was always present within him, and, as a result, he was unable during his political life to present a theory or outline of the goals to be pursued. This is my conviction. A conviction can be sustained even from a psychological point of view. Indeed, psychologically speaking, Mussolini was a weak person. All of his decisive political acts were reactions to immediate circumstances. He did not have the strength or the will to dominate the events. Instead, he was dominated by them (p. 156).

(2) In answer to the second question: "Why did Gentile become a fascist? Which intellectual experiences did he see as part of the totalitarian State?" I said:

> This is a key question for me since I was a fascist in the Gentilean manner. On 10 January 1918, I heard Gentile's lecture for the first time and for at least ten years, my life was tied to Gentile's life. Therefore, regarding this question, I am in the position to answer it as no one else in Italy can. Gentile was not a fascist when fascism was born. However, his thought was intrinsically linked to some of the demands typical of fascism. Mussolini's brand of fascism meant pragmatism, futurism, and the necessity to act to establish a new world, but it was also linked to the Italian idealistic tradition, and, therefore, to Gentile and Croce.

Croce and Gentile share a common ideological faith, which if we were to define it, historically speaking, we would call antidemocratic faith. What do we mean by antidemocracy? We define it as the need to oppose the process of degeneration of the democratic system as it was developing in the first twenty years of this century. Not more democracy, therefore, but instead liberalism. A liberalism understood according to the historical right-wing tradition which promoted a strong government—the kind of government one could expect from fascism. This liberalism, then, was the liberalism generating the historic dialectical debate from which Croce and Gentile emerged transformed in early 1925 when each went his own way (pp. 192–198).

Chapter Ten

1. Giuseppe Bottai, *Scritti di Giuseppe Bottai* [*Writings of Giuseppe Bottai*], ed. Roberto Bartolozzi and Riccardo Del Giudice (Bologna: Cappelli, 1965).

2. Giuseppe Bottai, "La verità di un dissenso" ["Truth about Dissent"], *Critica fascista* (1 June 1932), pp. 201–202; and "Il punto su Ferrara" ["A Consideration about the Congress of Ferrara"], *Critica fascista* (15 June 1935), pp. 221–223. Also in Ugo Spirito, *Capitalismo e corporativismo* [*Capitalism and Corporativism*] (Florence: Sansoni, 1933), p. 21.

3. Ugo Spirito, "Dentro e Fuori" ["Inside and Outside"], *Critica fascista* (1 July 1947), p. 243.

4. Giuseppe Bottai, "Vent'anni di Fascismo" ["Twenty Years of Fascism"], *Primato* (1 November 1942), p. 387.

5. Giuseppe Bottai, *Scritti di Giuseppe Bottai*, pp. 397–398.

Chapter Eleven

1. Palmiro Togliatti, "La filosofia del comunismo" ["The Philosophy of Communism"], *Rinascita* (April–May 1948), p. 113

2. Giorgio Fano, "Togliatti e la filosofia (nel n. 4–5 di *Rinascita*" ["The Philosophy of Togliatti"], *Stoa* (September–October 1948), p. 157.

Chapter Twelve

1. Marino Gentile, in *Il ragguaglio dell'attività culturale e artistica dei cattolici in Italia* (1959), p. 77.

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APPENDIX

Persons, Events, and Institutions Mentioned in Text

Academy of Lincei. Scientific institution founded in Rome in 1603. The Academy was so-named because to be a scientist one needs the exceptional sight of a lynx. Its most celebrated member was Galileo Galilei. The Academy was suppressed by fascism in 1939 and resurrected in 1944.

Dino Alfieri (1886–1966). Politician. Alfieri founded the Milan Nationalist Group. He fought in World War I and after the war joined the fascists. He was Minister of Culture during the mid-1930s and Ambassador to the Vatican. At the Fascist Grand Council meeting of 24–25 July 1943, he voted against Mussolini, virtually dooming fascism by this act.

Roberto Almagià (1881–1962). Geographer. Almagià taught at the University of Padua at the age of twenty-seven and later at the University of Rome. Almagià's scientific research extended for more than sixty years and includes more than 550 articles and hundreds of reviews. He was one of the most influential Italian scholars in geography.

Giovanni Amendola (1882–1926). Politician. Amendola opposed fascism in writing and action. He was the leader of the parliamentary secession of Aventino (1924), when the antifascist opposition walked out to show its disapproval of Giacomo Matteotti's murder by fascists, and he was one of the promoters of the antifascist *Manifesto degli intellettuali italiani* [*Manifesto of the Italian Intellectuals*] in 1925. He died the same year as a consequence of the beatings he suffered at the hands of a group of fascists.

Carlo Antoni (1896–1959). Philosopher and literary critic. Antoni taught at the University of Padua. He fought in World War I and was an antifascist who participated in the Resistance on the side of the Liberal Party during the Nazi occupation of Italy. He wrote on the aesthetics of neoidealism and on German historicism.

Dionisio Anzilotti (1867–1950). Lawyer. Anzilotti taught international law at the universities of Palermo, Bologna, and Rome. He was Undersecretary of the League of Nations and as such played an important role in the elaboration of the statutes of the International Court. He became a member of the Academy of Lincei and of the Academy of Italy.

Gino Arias (1879–1940). Lawyer and economist. Arias taught law at the universities of Pisa and Rome, and corporative economics at the University of Florence. He was the author of countless studies on both economics and laws. Arias was one of the eighteen members of the Solons Commission. In protest over the fascist implementation of the racial laws in 1938, he moved to Argentina, where he taught at the University of Cordoba.

Roberto Bartolozzi. [Relevant information about this person is not available].

Giovanni Benelli (1921–1982). Cardinal. In the 1930s, Benelli worked for the office of the Secretary of State in the Vatican under the leadership of the then Monsignor Giovanni Montini, future Pope. He was sent as Apostolic Nuntius to Dublin, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, and Madrid. He was also named as the Vatican's ambassador to UNESCO. He was called back to the Vatican by Pope Montini as Undersecretary of State. In 1977, he became Archbishop of Florence.

Enrico Berlinguer (1922–1984). Politician. Berlinguer was the General Secretary of the Communist Party from 1972 to 1984. He spent his entire career in the party apparatus and witnessed the great changes that occurred both in the Communist Party and in Italy since World War II. He was best known as the leading proponent of Eurocommunism and for his strategy of the "historical compromise," or the attempt to establish a political understanding with the ruling Christian Democratic Party.

Ernesto Bonaiuti (1881–1946). Philosopher. Bonaiuti studied in a seminary with Pope John XXIII and became a priest. As a result of his unorthodox view of the doctrines of the Church, he was excommunicated. He was a prolific writer on religious subjects.

Umberto Bosco (1900–1968). Literary critic. Bosco, a professor of Italian literature at the University of Milan and University of Rome, contributed to the critical edition of Francesco Petrarch's works. He was a member of the Academy of Lincei and the Academy of La Crusca and was one of the editors-in-chief of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*] from 1933 to 1955. He was also one of the creators of the *Dizionario Enciclopedico Italiano, 1955–1961* [*Italian Encyclopedic Dictionary*].

Giuseppe Bottai (1895–1959). Politician. Bottai founded the *fasci di combattimento* (fighting squads) and was a leader of Roman fascism. Editor of the journal *La critica fascista* in 1923, he later became Minister of Corporations (1923–1932) and wrote *La carta del lavoro* [*The Labor Charter*] in 1927. Bottai was a member of the Fascist Grand Council from 1923 to 1943, and in the last meeting of the Council on 24–25 July 1943, he voted against Mussolini and for the end of fascism. He was condemned to life imprisonment *in absentia* after World War II. Bottai returned to Italy in 1974 after he was granted amnesty.

Stefano Bottari (1907–1967). Art history professor. Bottari was an expert on Sicilian art of the Middle Ages and wrote books on Leonardo da Vinci, Antonello da Messina, and Correggio. He taught at the universities of Messina and Bologna.

Guido Calogero (1904–1986). Philosopher. Calogero initially was a follower of Gentile. By 1939, he moved away from Gentile to form his own brand of philosophy based on dialogue. His most famous book, *La filosofia del dialogo* [*Philosophy of Dialogue*], was published in 1962.

Delio Cantimori (1904–1966). Historian. A follower of Gentile's actual idealism, Cantimori created an historical approach based on secular, anticlerical, and nationalistic principles with which he reinter-preted the periods of the Middle Ages and Humanism. He moved toward Marxism taking polemic positions against idealism and actual idealism. After World War II, he collaborated intensely in *Rinascita* (1944) and *Società* (1945–1962), journals associated with the Italian Communist Party. He wrote on many topics, including historical approaches and methodologies in *Studi di storia* [*Historical Studies*, 1954], *Conversando di storia* [*Discussing History*, 1967], and *Storici e storia* [*Historians and History*, 1971].

Filippo Carli (1876–1938). Politician and economist. Carli was a spokesperson for the Nationalist Party, representing the industrialists. Later, he embraced fascism and directed the Fascist Confederation of Merchants. Carli taught political economics at the University of Pisa.

Armando Carlini (1878–1959). Philosopher. Carlini held the post of Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Pisa. He wrote on a variety of philosophical subjects from John Locke to Gentile.

Giuseppe Caronia (1884–1977). Pediatrician and expert in infectious diseases. Caronia taught medicine at the University of Rome, serving as its president from 1944 to 1948. He presided over the Committee of Rehabilitation of the University.

Carta del lavoro [*Labor Charter*]. Issued in April 1927, this basic document of fascist corporativism consisted of thirty articles that embodied the general guidelines affecting labor relations, employment, and social welfare programs.

Alessandro Casati (1881–1955). Politician. In 1923, Casati became Minister of Public Education of the coalition government headed by Mussolini. In 1925, he joined the opposition and was forced into private life. He returned to active political life after World War II.

Widar Cesarini-Sforza (1883–1965). Philosopher with a specialization in law. Cesarini-Sforza wrote *Guida allo studio della filosofia del diritto* [*Guide to the Philosophy of Law*, 1941].

Federico Chabod (1901–1960). Historian. Chabod was the Director of the Institute of Historical Studies and an expert on the Italian Renaissance. He taught modern history at the universities of Perugia, Milan, and Rome. He studied the problem of the State in Machiavelli's *Il Principe* [*The Prince*, 1924].

Manlio Ciardo. Philosopher. Ciardo wrote several books on idealism and historicism, such as *Le quattro epoche dello storicismo: Vico, Kant, Hegel, Croce* [*The Four Periods of Historicism: Vico, Kant, Hegel, Croce*, 1947] and *Un fallito tentativo di riforma dello hegelismo. L'idealismo attuale* [*A Failed Attempt to Reform Hegelianism: Actual Idealism*, 1948].

Civic Committees. Political organizations formed to involve the Catholic population in the electoral process. Founded in 1948 by Luigi Gedda (1902–), president of the Italian Catholic Association, the Commit-

tees became a powerful electoral machine that propelled the Christian-Democrats to become the dominant political party in the postwar era.

Aldo Contento. Expert in labor law and professor at the University of Parma.

Mario Corsi (1923–). Philosopher. Corsi wrote on major Italian thinkers, such as Antonio Labriola and Benedetto Croce.

Luigi Credaro (1860–1939). Philosopher and educator. Credaro was a professor of pedagogy at the University of Rome. He translated Johann F. Herbart's philosophical works. He held the post of Minister of Public Education 1910–1920.

Amedeo Crivellucci (1850–1914). Historian. He wrote about the Middle Ages, especially on the relationship between State and Church.

Benedetto Croce (1866–1952). The most important Italian intellectual of the first half of the twentieth century. Croce's thought influenced generations of Italians in the fields of philosophy, history, aesthetics, and literary criticism. He was an antifascist and was the major promoter of the *Manifesto degli intellettuali italiani* [*Manifesto of the Italian Intellectuals*] who opposed fascism after Giacomo Matteotti's assassination. Never silenced by the regime, Croce was also a convinced anti-Marxist to whose ideology he was introduced in his youth by Antonio Labriola. He was elected Senator of the Republic after World War II as a liberal. His famous philosophical relationship with Gentile stimulated Italian culture during fascism. Croce transformed Hegelian idealism into a personal system. Its major points were the concepts of absolute historicity of reality, the dialectic of the "distincts," and the coincidence of philosophy and history. In aesthetics, Croce is remembered for his interpretation of art as pure intuition and individual expression.

Mariano D'Amelio (1871–1943). Expert in constitutional law. From 1899 to 1905, D'Amelio was both judge and president of the Supreme Court of Massaua, in Eritrea, then an Italian colony. After his return to Italy, he became one of the most active contributors to the journal *Rivista di diritto pubblico*. During the fascist period, he was president of the Supreme Court of Appeals.

Riccardo Del Giudice (1900–1985). Trade-union activist and economist. Del Giudice is considered to be a minor figure of fascism and a typical exponent of the middle class that constituted the backbone of the regime. An active fascist trade union member, he believed in corporativism. From 1934–1939, he was president of the Fascist Confederation of Merchants. During 1940 to 1943, he was Undersecretary to Giuseppe Bottai, then Minister of Public Education. He directed the journal *Stato e diritto* [*State and Law*] and as an economist wrote *Il consiglio nazionale dell'economia e del lavoro* [*The National Council of Economy and Labor*].

Cesare De Lollis (1863–1928). Literary critic. Initially a follower of Croce's aesthetic and literary theories, De Lollis was the first in Italy to

develop a critical approach based on formal and stylistic structures.

Francesco De Sanctis (1817–1883). Politician and literary critic. De Sanctis's method of criticism, based on a rereading of Hegel's idealistic criticism, overcame the narrow formalism of the Rhetorical School and the abstract content of the Romantic School. For De Sanctis, an effective criticism could be achieved if art is considered as a unity of form and content lived as a single experience.

Gaetano De Sanctis (1870–1957). Historian. De Sanctis was removed from his teaching post during the fascist regime for refusing allegiance to fascism. After World War II, he was reintegrated as a professor of Greek history at the University of Rome.

Francesco De Sarlo (1864–1937). Philosopher and psychologist. De Sarlo held the post of Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the Institute of Superior Learning of Florence. He wrote on Gentile and Croce, as well as on freedom. His famous speech, "L'alta cultura e l'alta società" ["High Culture and High Society"], delivered at the National Congress of Philosophy in 1926, was published posthumously in 1947.

Alberto De Stefani (1879–1969). Economist and politician. De Stefani taught at the universities of Naples and Rome. An early supporter of fascism, he was Minister of Finance in the first Mussolini government from 1922 to 1925. He served on the Fascist Grand Council and voted against Mussolini during the session of 24–25 July 1943, which brought the downfall of fascism. Condemned to death by the fascists of the Republic of Salò, he managed to escape. At the end of the war, he was acquitted by the Tribunal of the High Court. De Stefani was responsible for the entries on the science of finance for the first volume of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*].

Cesare Maria De Vecchi (1884–1959). Politician. One of the members of the quadrumvirate of the March on Rome (October 1922), De Vecchi was Undersecretary in Mussolini's first government. In 1935–1936, he became Minister of Public Education and in 1937, Governor of the Dodecanese Islands. He voted against Mussolini in the last session of the Fascist Grand Council on 24–25 July 1943. He was condemned *in absentia* at the trial of Verona (1944) by the fascists of the Republic of Salò. After World War II, he was sentenced to five years imprisonment for crimes committed as a fascist. When he was freed, he lived as a private citizen.

Luigi Einaudi (1874–1961). Economist and politician. Einaudi taught economics at the universities of Milan and Turin. A convinced anti-Marxist and follower of liberal economic theories, he was also opposed to fascism. Forced to flee to Switzerland in 1943, he returned to Italy the following year to become the President of Banca d'Italia. In 1948, Einaudi became the first president of the Republic.

Giorgio Fano (1885–1963). Linguist. As a Jew, Fano was persecuted by fascism and was a victim of the racial laws. He lived at the margins of the official Italian philosophical culture. His philosophical debate was aimed at Croce and Gentile, both of whom he rebuked for having reduced empirical, concrete facts into a single category and for having downgraded the various sciences to pseudo-concepts. Some of his books include: *Saggio sulle origini e natura del linguaggio* [*Essay on the Origins and Nature of Language*, 1937] and *Teosofia orientale e filosofia greca* [*Eastern Theosophy and Greek Philosophy*, 1949].

Roberto Farinacci (1892–1945). Politician. In 1919, Farinacci joined the emerging fascist movement and created one of the most aggressive *fasci di combattimento* (fighting squads) with which he fought against the striking workers. After the political takeover by Mussolini, he became a feared political figure representing the most radical and intransigent wing of the Fascist Party. Farinacci claimed the superiority of the party apparatus over the government, including Mussolini. Secretary of the Fascist Party in 1925–1926, he resigned due to disagreements with Mussolini. He returned to active national political life as a member of the Fascist Grand Council. Farinacci remained faithful to Mussolini at the last session of the Council on 24–25 July 1943 and was killed by the partisans on 28 April 1945.

Luigi Federzoni (1878–1967). Politician. Federzoni joined the nationalist movement and became one of the founding members of the Italian Nationalist Association. He supported the merger between nationalism and fascism and served the fascist regime as Minister of Colonies from October 1922 to June 1924. Following the assassination of Giacomo Matteotti, he became Minister of the Interior. As Minister, Federzoni brought the Fascist Party apparatus under his control. In 1938, he was made president of the Academy of Italy. At the Fascist Grand Council meeting on 24–25 July 1943, he voted against Mussolini and for the end of the regime. The Fascist Tribunal of the Republic of Salò (1943–1945) condemned him to death *in absentia*. Tried and sentenced by the Italian Supreme Court after World War II, Federzoni was pardoned in 1947.

Feltrinelli Institute. Educational institution founded by Carlo Feltrinelli (1881–1935), industrialist and financier. The Institute prepared the youth for mechanical and artisan careers.

Enrico Fermi (1901–1954). Physicist. Fermi taught physics at the University of Rome. At twenty-five, he became a member of the Academy of Italy. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for science in 1938. Soon after, he moved to the United States to protest the approval of the racial laws by the fascist regime. He was the chief architect in the construction of the atomic bomb. He contributed sections on physics, chemistry, and mathematics to the first volume of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*].

Enrico Ferri (1856–1929). Sociologist and philosopher. Ferri was a student of Roberto Ardigò (1828–1920)—the most important Italian positivist philosopher—during his high school years in Mantua. He studied

at the University of Bologna and received a degree in sociology. His thesis was on "Imputabilità umana e la negazione del libero arbitrio" ["Human Imputability and the Negation of the Free Will"]. He became Professor of Criminal Law at the universities of Bologna, Siena, Pisa, and Rome. He was a member of the Socialist Party and Director of its daily newspaper, *L'Avanti*, from 1900 to 1905. Later, he adhered to fascism and in 1929 was named Senator. An early scholar of criminal sociology, Ferri is considered, with Cesare Lombroso, as one of the founders of the Positivist School of Criminal Law.

Pasquale Galluppi (1770–1846). Philosopher. Though educated in rationalism, Galluppi developed a philosophical system based on the importance of experience in reaching an objective knowledge of reality. He taught theoretical philosophy at the University of Naples.

Rinaldo Garbari. Literary critic. Garbari wrote on the Italian poet Giosuè Carducci (1835–1907) and Croce.

Pietro Gasparri (1852–1934). Cardinal and expert in ecclesiastical law. In 1914, Gasparri was Secretary of State under Pope Benedict XV and held this office until 1931. As Secretary of State, he contributed to the elaboration and approval of the Vatican Agreements signed in 1929 by Mussolini on behalf of the Italian people.

Agostino Gemelli (1878–1959). Philosopher. Gemelli followed the positivist philosophy in his youth. After converting to Catholicism, he became a Franciscan priest and a cultural activist. He stressed the importance of principles of Thomistic philosophy, adapting them to modern times. He was the founder of the Catholic University of Milan.

Benedetto Gentile (1908–98). Lawyer. Benedetto was Gentile's fifth child. He joined the Italian Diplomatic Corps where he has served as Ambassador to various nations. After World War II, he became director of the Sansoni Publishing House.

Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944). Philosopher and politician. Gentile founded the philosophy of actual idealism, a philosophical system according to which the Universal "I" or Absolute Subject realizes itself as Absolute Thought and is immanent in all things. He was the major intellectual spokesperson of fascism. In 1922, he joined Mussolini's cabinet as Minister of Public Education. While he was in office, he tried to reform the entire public education system. Gentile's school reform introduced the teaching of religion on an elementary level only. In 1924, following the assassination of Giacomo Matteotti, Gentile resigned his post as Minister. In 1925, he became the Director of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*]. In that same year, he issued the *Manifesto degli intellettuali del fascismo* [*Manifesto of the Fascist Intellectuals*], which was immediately countered by Croce's *Manifesto degli intellettuali italiani* [*Manifesto of the Italian Intellectuals*]. Although he did not show enthusiasm for the fascist racial laws, his faith in fascism never waivered. In 1943, he

proclaimed his support for the Republic of Salò. He later was killed by antifascist groups on 14 April 1944.

Marino Gentile (1908–1980). Philosopher. Gentile taught philosophy at the University of Padua. An initial follower of Giovanni Gentile's actual idealism, he later developed a philosophy closer to Spirito's problematicism.

Vincenzo Gioberti (1801–1852). Priest, philosopher, and politician. Initially influenced by Antonio Rosmini's philosophical view, Gioberti subsequently turned against him. He contributed to the unification of Italy through *Il primato morale e civile degli italiani* [*The Moral and Civil Superiority of Italians*, 1843], a book in which he presented the Church as the foundation of moral and social values essential to the Italian unification.

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). Politician. Gramsci was the founder of the Italian Communist Party in 1921. Active against fascism, he was found guilty by the fascist regime for attempting to organize an armed insurrection against the State and was sent to jail where he later died. While in jail, he wrote *Quaderni del carcere* [*Prison Notebooks*], six volumes of annotations on a variety of literary, political and cultural subjects, including the concept of popular hegemony and the function of intellectuals in society. These volumes were published posthumously by Einaudi Publishing House from 1947 to 1951.

Donato Jaja (1839–1814). Philosopher. Jaja was Gentile's philosophy teacher at the University of Pisa. He remained a follower of Kant even after discovering Hegel's philosophy.

Pasquale Jannaccone (1872–1959). Economist. Jannaccone wrote *Il contratto di lavoro* [*Workers' Contract*, 1897]; *Prezzi e mercati* [*Prices and Markets*, 1936]; and *Moneta e lavoro* [*Money and Labor*, 1946].

Antonio Labriola (1843–1904). Philosopher. Labriola taught philosophy at the University of Rome. After an initial phase as a Hegelian, he embraced Marxism and introduced its doctrines in Italy through a brilliant critical analysis. However, he did not limit himself to the theoretical aspect. His interests turned in a decidedly political direction—participation in the fight of the emergent Italian proletarian class to improve its socioeconomic conditions. To this end, he worked closely with the newly formed Italian Socialist Party and became the spokesperson for the popular education and universities.

Ugo La Malfa (1903–1979). Politician. In 1924, La Malfa joined the opposition against fascism that was organized by Giovanni Amendola. In 1942, he was one of the founders of the Partito d'Azione (Action Party), and he joined the Resistance in 1943. After World War II, La Malfa became a member of several Italian governments.

Riccardo Lombardi (1908–1970). Jesuit priest and political agitator. Lombardi gave speeches in the public squares of the major Italian and

European cities. He was a contributor to the journal *Civiltà Cattolica* and founded the Catholic movement, "For a Better World." In addition, he hosted a radio program that warned the Italian people about Marxist dictatorship. As a result, he was known as "God's microphone."

Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice (1879–1938). Educator. Lombardo-Radice taught pedagogy in several Italian universities. His pedagogical ideals were influenced by Gentile's actual idealism. Gentile called him to direct the Ministry of Public Education's programs for the elementary schools in 1923–1924. After Giacomo Matteotti's assassination, he resigned from the post and active political life.

Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909). Psychiatrist and anthropologist. Lombroso was a professor of legal medicine and public health at the universities of Pavia and Turin. He was also the doctor in charge of the Turin jails and was General Inspector of the mental asylums for the region of Piedmont. He became famous with his book on criminal anthropology, *L'uomo delinquente* [*The Criminal Man,* 1876], where he tried to establish links between the physical and psychosomatic anomalies of the individual and social conditions, shifting the responsibility for the crime from the criminal to society. Lombroso transformed psychology and anthropology into experimental disciplines.

Andrea Lorusso-Caputi. [Relevant information about this person is not available].

Guido Martellotti (1905–1979). Expert in philology. Martellotti was Professor of Medieval Philology at the University of Macerata and at the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa. He also was one of the most active collaborators of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*].

Leonida Martini. [Relevant information about this person is not available].

Giacomo Matteotti (1885–1924). Lawyer and politician. After receiving his law degree, Matteotti embraced a political career in the Socialist Party. He became active in organizing the working class into trade unions. Elected in the Italian Parliament in 1919, he emerged as one of the most informed members in economic and financial matters. After the advent of fascism, Matteotti became quite critical of the emerging dictatorship. He was killed by the fascists on 10 June 1924, a few days after he delivered a powerful speech in the Italian parliament, asking for the annulment of the previous April election.

Raffaele Mattioli (1895–1973). Banker with strong literary and artistic interests. Mattioli grew up in the region of Abruzzi and was Croce's personal friend. Mattioli became one of the most powerful figures in the world of Italian finance. He was the creator of two of the most powerful Italian credit institutions: Mediobanca and Comit.

Vincenzo Miano. Administrator to the Vatican. Miano was a prolific writer on religious matters. He wrote about Pope Paul VI in *Ateismo e*

dialogo nell'insegnamento di Paolo VI [*Atheism and Dialogue in the Teaching of Pope Paul VI*, 1970].

Roberto Michels (1876–1936). Sociologist. Michels was born in Cologne, Germany, and became a naturalized Italian citizen. Influenced by the theories of Vilfredo Pareto, he studied sociology and was an expert on mass parties. He taught sociology at the universities of Basil, Turin, and Rome. He formulated the theory of the unavoidable domination exercised by the party structure over the membership, thus severely restricting the democratic process.

Paolo Michetti (1851–1929). Painter. In his paintings, he celebrated the environment, customs, and folklore of his native region, Abruzzi. His most famous painting, *La figlia di Iorio* [*Iorio's Daughter*], was based on the drama of Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938) of the same name.

Bruno Migliorini (1896–1975). Expert in philology. Migliorini was Professor of Romance Philology at the University of Friburg, Switzerland. From 1938 to 1966, he taught history of the Italian language at the University of Florence. He was one of the editors of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*] and was responsible for the section of linguistics from 1930 to 1933. From 1949 to 1964, he was President of the Academy of La Crusca, which has been monitoring the Italian language since 1587.

Francesco Modica. [Relevant information about this person is not available].

Giovanni Battista Montini (1897–1978). Pope from 1963 to 1978. Montini presided over the Roman Catholic Church as Paul VI in a period of radical change following the Vatican Council II (1961–1963). Champion of the poor and of the Third World, he took a strong stand against abortion and against the most radical interpretation of Vatican Council deliberations.

Benito Mussolini (1883–1945). Politician and journalist. Mussolini became politically involved at a young age as Secretary of the Socialist Club while he was an elementary school teacher in the little town of Gualtieri in the region of Emilia-Romagna. In 1902, he emigrated to Switzerland where he became an active member of the Socialist Party as a worker organizer and writer for *L'Avanti*, the main voice of the party. Upon his return to Italy in 1904, he resumed his teaching and continued organizing workers. In 1909, Mussolini started writing for the daily *Il Popolo*, where he led an intense campaign against the Popular Party, heavily influenced by Catholicism. During these years, he had only a superficial knowledge of Marxism and sympathized with revolutionary trade unionism. Although he was initially neutral with regard to Italy's participation in World War I, he subsequently became a vociferous advocate for total involvement. When he was expelled from the Socialist Party, he founded his own daily, *Il popolo d'Italia.* He enlisted in the army, went to war, and was wounded. When the war ended, Mussolini's ideological position became close to that of the Nationalist Party, even though he sympathized somewhat with the proletariat. This ideological ambivalence was more the

result of a calculated opportunism than of profound convictions. As a consequence, he found himself politically aligned with the rich agrarians and the capitalists, who provided financial support for his "fascist organizations." In 1921, Mussolini was elected to Congress and earned the nickname "Duce," as the only leader capable of resolving the nation's enormous problems. After the Giacomo Matteotti's assassination, he moved to abolish the other political parties and gained control of the nation for the Fascist Party. The following years saw the consolidation of Mussolini's personal prestige and his ascent to dictatorial power. Following the Ethiopian War in 1936, which gave Italy a "place in the sun," he moved closer to Hitler implementing racial laws, and subsequently, gave him Italy's support during World War II. Mussolini was killed by partisans at Dongo, Lombardy, in 1945.

Carlo A. Nallino (1872–1938). Expert in Arabic and Asian literatures and civilizations. Nallino contributed to the first volume of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*].

Mario Niccoli (1904–1964). Historian. Niccoli was one of the initial editors of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*]. Together with Umberto Bosco, he envisioned and created the *Dizionario Enciclopedico Italiano, 1955–1961* [*Italian Encyclopedic Dictionary*].

Adolfo Omodeo (1889–1946). Historian. Omodeo studied history at the University of Palermo where Gentile was his professor of philosophy. His historical thought was initially influenced by Gentile's actual idealism. Like many other young intellectuals, Omodeo saw fascism as a possible instrument of political change. By 1924, however, he broke with fascism and Gentile. He became a close disciple of Croce and a defender of the liberal tradition against the fascist regime. His major historical interests were dedicated to Christianity and to the period of Italian Risorgimento. Omodeo wrote *Il valore umano della storia* [*Human Value of History*, 1924]; *L'età del Risorgimento italiano* [*The Age of the Italian Risorgimento*, 1942]; and *Figure e passioni del Risorgimento italiano* [*Historical Figures and Ideals of the Italian Risorgimento*, 1945].

Federico M. Pacces (1903–1974). Economist. Pacces taught industrial economics at the University of Turin and was the editor of the economic journal *24 Ore*. He published such books as *Nostro tempo della rivoluzione industriale* [*The Industrial Revolution of Our Times*, 1939] and *La produzione* [*Production*, 1951].

Aurelio Padovani. Head of Neapolitan fascism and an exponent of the left wing of the Fascist Party. Expelled from the party, which he had accused of having become too accommodating and bourgeois, Padovani was subsequently reinstated. He died in a mysterious accident in 1926.

Antonino Pagliaro (1898–1973). Expert in philology. Pagliaro taught philology at the University of Rome. He was one of the editors of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*] and was responsible for the section of linguistics from 1924 to 1929. He then became the editor of *Dizionario di politica* [*Dictionary of Politics*], published in 1940.

Giuseppe Palladino (1908–1982). Economist. Palladino was the author of seven volumes of an economics text, two of which received the First Prize of the Academy of Lincei. He was a consultant to the Ministry of the Treasury from 1956 to 1959.

Maffeo Pantaleoni (1857–1924). Lawyer and economist. Pantaleoni taught economics at the universities of Camerino, Naples, and Rome. A fervent nationalist, he fought for the intervention of Italy in World War I. In 1923, Pantaleoni was named Senator. He contributed to the resurgence of economic studies in Italy with both his theoretical analyses and his empirical programs. He became an advocate of the concept of utility based on the psychological dimension of monetary value. Pantaleoni was the first to attempt an appraisal of Italy's wealth in 1884.

Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923). Engineer, economist, and sociologist. A follower of Maffeo Pantaleoni's economic theories, Pareto developed his own version of economic laws, according to which the unevenness of income is a natural occurrence given the unevenness of human abilities. As a sociologist, he formulated a theory that the political power is held by a succession of "elites."

Pontanian Academy. The most important humanistic center of Southern Italy, this academy was founded in Naples in 1442 during the reign of Alfonso I and centered around the figure of Antonio Beccadelli (1394–1471), named the Panormita. After Panormita's death, Giovanni Pontano (1426–1503) became the head of the Academy. Some of the most famous Renaissance figures, such as Giovanni della Casa (1503–1556) and Jacopo Sannazaro (1456–1530), gravitated around the Academy.

Mario Praz (1896–1982). Historian and critic of English literature. Praz's critical analysis emphasized the hidden links between literature and the visual arts. His book *La carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica* [*Flesh, Death, and the Devil in Romantic Literature,* 1930] constitutes a cornerstone in the criticism of European literature of the age of decadence.

Giuseppe Prezzolini (1882–1982). One of the most dynamic intellectuals of the early twentieth century. Prezzolini founded the journal *Il Leonardo* (1902–1907), which represented a reaction to positivist trends, and afterward directed another journal *La Voce*, which from 1888 to 1914 called for the moral and intellectual renewal of the Italians.

Regent's Decree. Law of an administrative nature. The decrees were issued after the fall of fascism by Prince Lieutenant Humbert of Savoy (1904–1983) who rose to Regent of Italy on 5 June 1944 after his father

Victor Emmanuel III (1869–1947) relinquished most of his power to him. On 9 May 1946, Humbert became King of Italy as Humbert II while his father went into exile. On 2 June 1946, a referendum approved by the Italian people ended the monarchy in favor of the republic. Humbert II, although he never abdicated, was forced into exile and died in Geneva.

Riccardo Riccardi (1897–1981). Geographer. Riccardi was a professor of geography at the University of Rome and contributed to the first volume of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*] in the areas of geography, anthropology and ethnology.

Umberto Ricci (1905–1940). Cultural Activist close to the left wing of the National Fascist Party. An idealist, Ricci wrote articles in the journals *Il Selvaggio* (1924–1943) and *L'universale* (1931–1936) against the leadership of the fascist regime, which had abandoned the initial revolutionary program that propelled it to national power. He was considered a heretic for praising the Bolshevik revolution and claiming the revolution was necessary to limit private property. He remained faithful to the ideals of fascism for which he volunteered to fight on the battle front during World War II.

Risorgimento. A nineteenth-century political movement that lead to the unification of Italy and the proclamation of national independence in 1861. The unification, however, was not yet completed. In 1866, Italy acquired Venice, and on 20 September 1870, occupied Rome. After World War I, Italy liberated the territories of Istria and the Trentino and acquired the South Tyrol.

Antonio Rosmini (1797–1855). Priest and philosopher who contributed to the formation of the unification of Italy. Rosmini was the major exponent of Catholic philosophy in his time, which he tried to relate to the other contemporary major philosophical schools: Kantianism and Hegelianism. Among his many books, *Principi della scienza morale* [*Principles of Moral Science*, 1831]; *Antropologia in servizio della scienza morale* [*Anthropology at the Service of Moral Science*, 1838]; and *Filosofia della politica* [*Philosophy of Politics*, 1839] stand out.

Ernesto Rossi (1897–1967). Economist and political activist. He was a disciple of Luigi Einaudi and, like him, was opposed to fascism. He was instrumental in organizing in Italy the Justice and Liberty movement, founded in Paris by Carlo Rosselli (1899–1937) and other exiles in the fall of 1929. Arrested in October 1930 and sentenced to twenty years in jail, he regained his freedom in July 1943. Contrary to the majority of antifascists, Rossi believed in a free market economy rather than in collectivism. He was a prolific writer on economic matters and a contributor to *Il Mondo*.

Vittorio Rossi (1865–1938). Literary critic. Rossi taught Italian literature and was one of Spirito's university professors. He wrote *Storia della letteratura italiana per uso dei licei, 1933–1935* [*History of Italian Literature for High Schools*] in three volumes and was responsible for the entries on Italian literature for the first volume of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*].

Edmondo Rossoni (1884–1965). Politician. President of the National Confederation of Fascist Trade Unions, 1921–1928. Rossoni joined the Fascist Grand Council and voted for the downfall of Mussolini at the last session of the Council on 24–25 July 1943. He was sentenced to die by the fascists of the Republic of Salò and later to life imprisonment by the new Italian government after World War II. Rossoni avoided both sentences by finding refuge in the Vatican. He later escaped to Canada and returned to Italy after the annulment of the sentences against political prisoners.

Luigi Salvatorelli (1886–1974). Historian and journalist. From 1916 to 1921, Salvatorelli taught History of the Church at the University of Naples. He then joined the daily newspaper, *La Stampa*, of Turin, where from 1921 to 1925 he directed a campaign against fascism. The articles from this campaign were compiled in two volumes, *Nazional fascismo* [*National Fascism*, 1923] and *Irrealtà Nazionalista* [*Extreme Nationalism*, 1925]. In addition, he wrote extensively on the Italian Risorgimento and on the Church.

Giuseppe Sangiorgio (1887–1960). General Director of Higher Education in Italy. In 1946, Sangiorgio was named advisor to the government.

Gennaro Sasso (1928–). Historian. Sasso studied with Federico Chabod and Carlo Antoni. In 1962, he was appointed Professor of History of Political Doctrines at the University of Urbino. His major areas of specialization include, the formation of modern conception of politics and of the State, and the political thought of Niccolò Machiavelli.

Desiderato Scenna (1872–1955). Professor of Classical Languages and Literatures at the G. B. Vico Liceo Classico [High School] of Chieti. A mentor to Ugo Spirito, Scenna translated several authors—Shakespeare, Longfellow (English), Fernando de Rojas (Spanish), Aristophanes (Greek), and Vergil (Latin) into Italian.

Michele Federico Sciacca (1908–1975). Philosopher. Sciacca taught history of philosophy at the University of Pavia and theoretical philosophy at the University of Genoa. He was initially a follower of actual idealism, although he denied its immanentistic aspect. He moved on to create his own brand of philosophy which included elements of Christian spiritualism.

Mauro Scoccimarro (1895–1972). Politician. Scoccimarro began his political career in 1919 in the Socialist Party. He worked for Antonio Gramsci as an editor of his journal *Ordine Nuovo* (1919–1922). In 1924, he became one of the leaders of the Communist Part of Italy. He was persecuted during fascism, sent to jail and held in confinement. After the end of World War II, he was elected as a member of the Italian Parliament and held the post of Minister of Finance in 1948.

Scuola Normale of Pisa. Founded 18 October 1810. Considered an elitist school where many of the greatest twentieth-century Italian philosophers either attended or taught. The Scuola Normale is still restricted to a highly select group of students. The degree conferred by the Scuola Normale is equivalent to a degree issued by the University of Pisa.

Osvaldo Sebastiani (1888–1945). Mussolini's Secretary during the 1930s and president of a section of the Audit Court. He was killed by an assassin hired by the partisans near the city of Brescia, Lombardy.

Solons' Commission. Comprised of eighteen members, this commission was created by Mussolini in 1925 to revise the constitution.

Bertrando Spaventa (1817–1883). Philosopher. Spaventa promoted Hegelian philosophy in Italy. His interpretation of Hegel stressed the creative activity of the knowing subject, thus anticipating the birth of actual idealism.

Achille Starace (1889–1945). Politician. One of the most intransigent leaders of fascism, Starace organized and led the *fasci di combattimento* (fighting squads) in the region of The Trentino. In 1931, he became secretary of the National Fascist Party and established the new code of "fascist style," a unique set of gestures aimed at the identification of the nation with the fascist regime. He was in charge of the Fascist Militia in 1939. Having fallen into disgrace with Mussolini, he was demoted in 1941 and neglected during the Republic of Salò. In 1945, Starace was shot by the partisans in Piazza Loreto in Milan.

Statute of the Kingdom of Piedmont. The Statute was issued by Charles Albert (1798–1849), King of Piedmont, one of the many kingdoms existing in Italy prior to its unification into a single nation. The kingdom of Piedmont was at the forefront in the wars of independence that the Italian people fought against Austria. Victor Emmanuel II (1820–1878), son of Charles Albert, became the first king of a unified Italy.

Palmiro Togliatti (1893–1964). Politician. Togliatti entered political life as an adolescent. He became a member of the Socialist Party in 1914 as an organizer of the workers. Togliatti joined Gramsci's Communist Party and became its secretary in 1927. He participated in the Spanish Civil War as a representative of International Communism. After the fall of fascism, Togliatti returned to Italy and became minister for various transitional governments. In December 1954, he was once again elected Secretary of the Italian Communist Party.

Giovanni Treccani (1877–1961). Textile magnate. Treccani is the founder of the Institute bearing his name. The Institute published the *Enciclopedia Italiana* [*Italian Encyclopedia*].

Paolo Raffaele Troiano (1863–1909). Philosopher. Troiano taught moral philosophy at the University of Turin. In his book *Le basi dell'umanesimo* [*The Foundations of Humanism*, 1907], he envisioned a "philosophy of humanism" based on the emotions and feelings as necessary ingredients for a moral person.

Bernardino Varisco (1850–1933). Philosopher. Initially a positivist, Varisco became a follower of Gentile's actual idealism. Finally, he developed his own brand of Christian existentialism.

Vatican Agreements. These were diplomatic agreements reached by Benito Mussolini for the Italian State and Cardinal Pietro Gasparri of the Holy See (Vatican), which put an end to the division that took place after the Italian army took over Rome on 20 September 1870. The Vatican Agreements recognized: (1) the existence of the kingdom of Italy with Rome as it capitol; and (2) the Vatican city as a true and sovereign State. The many prerogatives granted to the Catholic Church by the Italian State include the teaching of Christian doctrine in all public elementary schools.

Giambattista Vico (1668–1744). Philosopher. Vico reacted to René Descartes's rationalism by reevaluating the importance of history, the human and social experience, and the concreteness of philosophy. His entire philosophical system rotated around the principle, *verum et factum convertuntur*—truth is the same as fact. Truth consists of becoming aware of one's actions rather than one possessing clear and distinct ideas as Descartes postulated. In brief, Vico states that in order to know something, one must experience it. In 1725, he wrote *Principi di una scienza nuova* [*Principles of a New Science*].

Gaetano Vinci. Scientist. After having been the chairperson of the Department of Pharmacology, Vinci served as president of the University of Messina from 1928 to 1932 and again from 1935 to 1939. He studied the therapeutic qualities of the Scilla Marittima, a plant that grows along the coast of the region of Calabria.

Gioacchino Volpe (1876–1971). Historian. Volpe taught history of the Middle Ages at the University of Rome. He served in World War I and later embraced fascism. He broke with fascism during World War II. Heavily influenced by the writings of Gentile and Croce, he elaborated on a history of Italy in which fascism was seen as the crowning achievement of the entire historical national process

Arnaldo Volpicelli (1894–1968). Philosopher. Volpicelli taught law and philosophy at the universities of Pisa, Naples, and Rome. He translated and commented upon various works of Kant and Hans Kelsen.

Volta Meetings. Held annually and organized by the fascist regime, the Volta Meetings covered the wide spectrum of scientific disciplines and saw the participation of international scholars.

Guido Zanobini (1890–1964). Expert in constitutional and corporative law. Zanobini taught at the universities of Cagliari, Pisa, and Rome. He published in various scientific journals and directed the journal *Rivista trimestrale di diritto pubblico.*

Sergio Zavoli (1923–). Journalist and writer. In 1948, he joined RAI (national broadcasting corporation) as a special correspondent and in 1967 he became codirector of the Telegiornale (television news). He anchored many new television programs. Since 1994, he has been the director-in-chief of *Il Mattino*, the daily newspaper of Naples.

V. Zingone. [Relevant information about this person is not available].

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ugo Spirito, born in Arezzo, Tuscany, Italy in 1896, received his baccalaureate degrees in Law in 1918 and Philosophy in 1920. In 1932, he was named professor of Corporative Studies at the University of Pisa. In 1935, because of his doctrine of "corporative ownership," which was considered heretic by the fascist regime, he was sent into exile at the University of Messina, where he taught philosophy. He went to teach at the University of Genoa in 1936. After World War II, he taught philosophy at the University of Rome until retirement.

Spirito was the director of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* (*Italian Encyclopedia*) for philosophy, economics, and law until 1933. With Arnaldo Volpicelli, he directed the journal *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica* from 1927 to 1935. After World War II, he edited *Storia antologica dei problemi filosofici* (*Historical Anthology of Philosophical Problems*) in eight volumes and *I Classici della filosofia* (*Classics of Philosophy*) for the Sansoni Publishing House. He was an honorary member of the Academy of Lincei and president of the Giovanni Gentile Foundation for philosophical studies. Ugo Spirito died in 1979.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR AND EDITOR

Anthony G. Costantini, who was educated at Rutgers University, has been teaching at California State University, Northridge since 1988. He is the author of *Apprendistato e arte di Vasco Pratolini* [*Apprenticeship and Art of Vasco Pratolini*] (Ravenna: Longo, 1986) and of several studies on contemporary Italian literature, which appeared in *Misure critiche*, *Ipotesi 80*, *Campi immaginabili*, *Il cristallo*, *Le forme e la storia*, *Resine*, *Forum Italicum*, and *Italian Quarterly*. He coedited *Da Verga a Calvino* [*From Verga to Calvino*] (Fiesole: Cadmo, 2000). He is preparing an anthology in English of Ugo Spirito's writings.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1. Ugo Spirito (first row, first left), a student in the Department of Philosophy, University of Rome, sitting next to his mentor, Giovanni Gentile. Also present is Arnaldo Volpicelli (second row, first right), his friend and future coeditor of *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica* (1927).

Illustration 2. Ugo Spirito at the Appennine Mountains (1928).

Illustration 3. Spirito in 1934.

Illustration 4. Spirito with his students in 1934.

Illustration 5. Another photograph of Spirito with his students in 1934.

Illustration 6. Spirito strolling with historian Gioacchino Volpe (1941; on the original photograph, XI is written as XIX).

Illustration 7. Spirito shown (first row, fourth from right) with colleagues and students at the University of Rome. Gioacchino Volpe is pictured in first row, second from the right (1941).

Illustration 8. Spirito (second row, third from right) with friends in 1948.

Illustration 9. Spirito (second row, third from right) at the Philosophical Conference of Gallarate (1954).

Illustration 10. Spirito in 1970.

Illustration 11. Giovanni Gentile, Director of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* (*Italian Encyclopedia*) (1939).

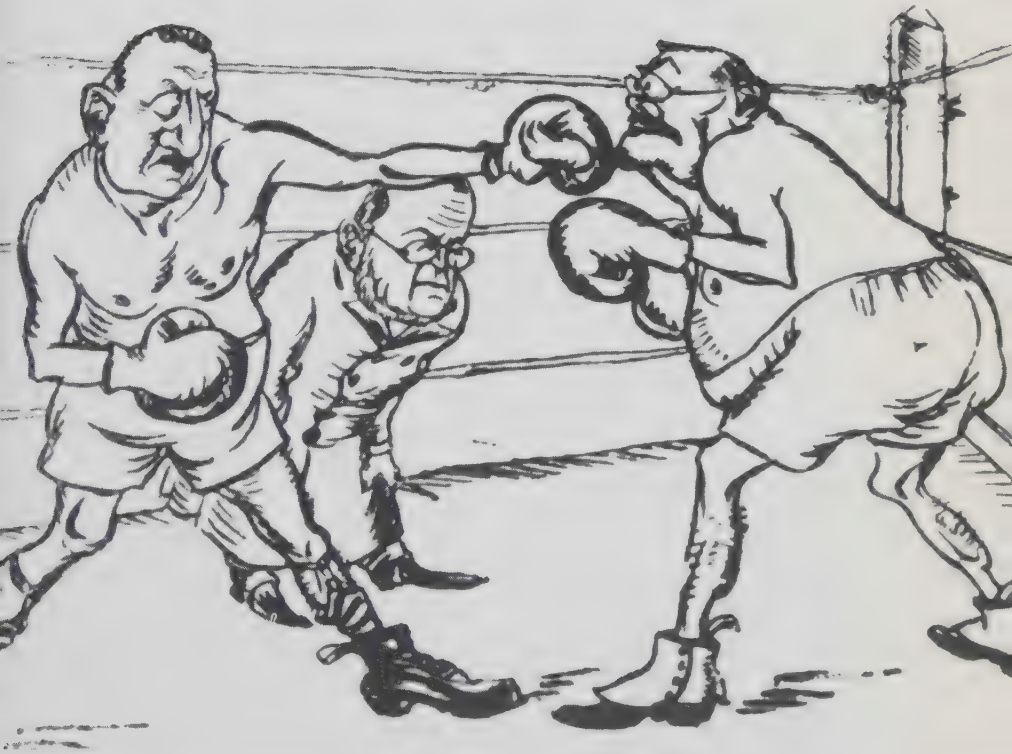

Illustration 12. A satirical vignette of Croce (left) and Gentile (right)—the two main protagonists of Italian culture in the early-twentieth century (*ca.* 1920s).

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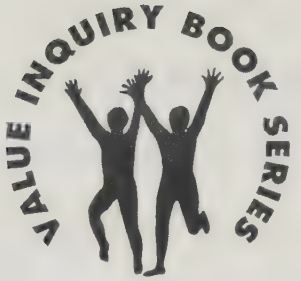

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